

BACK TO SCHOOL

POISON PREVENTION

FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Summer break is quickly coming to an end and it's almost time for a new school year to begin. Getting into new routines can mean new distractions, which can result in accidental or intentional poisonings both at home or in the classroom. In 2022, the **Virginia Poison Center** managed approximately 5,000 cases related to school-aged children who were exposed to a variety of potential poisons. As you begin purchasing supplies and preparing for the new school year, make sure you are taking time to poison-proof your home and classroom.



If you have questions about potential poisons or suspect a poisoning, call the **Virginia Poison Center** at **1-800-222-1222**. Our staff is available 24/7 to provide **FREE** and confidential medical assistance.

MEDICATION SAFETY DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Mornings can be chaotic, especially when you are settling back into a routine. At home and at school medication safety is important for children of all ages. If your child is going to receive medication at school, be sure to provide a list of all medications with dosage instructions and stick with a consistent schedule to avoid double dosing.

Safety Tips:

- Be sure to read and follow medicine labels for every dose.
- Use the dosing device, if one comes with the medication.
- Do not take multiple medicines with the same active ingredient.
- Keep medicines in their original containers.
- Check expiration dates on medications.
- Store all medications up, away and out of sight from children.
- Talk with children about only taking medication with permission/guidance from a parent or trusted adult.
- Talk with teens about only taking the recommended amount of their medications and about medication abuse and misuse.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES



We all know young children are quick to put things in their mouth but did you know that most school supplies today are nontoxic and will not cause any significant symptoms? However, when shopping for school supplies take extra precaution by looking for products with the **AP seal**, which indicates those products have been certified as safe and nontoxic. It is also recommended for parents and teachers to start off the new school year by talking with children about safe usage and storage of pens, pencils, markers, and paint products and the importance of keeping them out of their mouth and away from their eyes.



Also, when buying new supplies or shoes for back to school be cognizant of silica gel packets. Silica gel is a drying agent that is meant to remove moisture from enclosed spaces. These packets are often found in electronics, new shoes, bags, or medicine bottles. While it is essentially harmless, it can cause problems if eaten in large quantities by small children or adults with conditions that make it hard to swallow. Swallowing the entire package can pose a choking hazard.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT HAND SANITIZER

Hand sanitizer is everywhere these days, attached to book bags, in purses, in devices down the hallways and in large bottles in the classroom. Poison centers receive calls each year for children who are exposed to hand sanitizer. Most hand sanitizers contain alcohol. However, once it is rubbed into the hands, the alcohol evaporates and is no longer present. While alcohol poisonings are possible from hand sanitizer, accidentally ingesting a small amount while applying the product should **NOT** cause a child to get sick. The dose of hand sanitizer and weight of the child will determine if it is a poison.

At the beginning of each school year take time to teach children how to use hand sanitizers properly and supervise them while they learn. If you have hand sanitizer at home or in the classroom, teach children to use less than a dime-sized amount and rub their hands together until they are dry.



BE AWARE OF PEANUT ALLERGIES

Back to school means children will be surrounded by all kinds of food products. Peanuts are a common food allergy, especially within schools. Severe anaphylaxis (allergic reactions) can be potentially fatal to those who are allergic to peanuts and tree nuts. Those with peanut allergies should always carry and know how to operate an in-date epinephrine auto-injector to treat allergic reactions. Peanut allergies have increased three-fold over the last 10-15 years, especially in young children. Peanuts are not in the same class as pecans, walnuts or other tree nuts since they grow under the ground. An allergy to peanuts does not necessarily mean an increase risk for tree nut allergies, though about 25-40 percent of people with peanut allergies will also be allergic to tree nuts. Casual contact with nuts is generally not a problem unless the nut or nut residue comes into direct contact with the eyes, nose or mouth. It is always a good idea to ask your child's teacher if there are any students in the class with allergies before sending in food items.

Some of the mild-moderate signs of an allergic reaction are hives or rashes, itching, skin redness, eyelid swelling, and lip swelling. For mild reactions children can be given antihistamines such as Benadryl or Claritin. Major signs of an allergic reaction can be life threatening. These signs include tongue swelling, difficulty swallowing, shortness of breath, loss of consciousness, vomiting, confusion, wheezing, or pale skin. If these signs are noted, epinephrine (EPI Pen) should be administered in the large muscle of the leg if available and 911 should be called immediately.



If an accidental misuse (i.e. stick to the finger) occurs with the EPI Pen, call the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice.

PLANTS ON THE PLAYGROUND

While recess may be the favorite time of day for students and teachers alike, outdoor play can pose dangers for children when it comes to exposures to poisonous plants. It is a great idea for school personnel to have an idea of the types of plants growing, if any, on the playground in case of an emergency.

Safety Tips:

- Teach children not to pick or eat anything from a plant outside, unless they have permission.
- Remove all mushrooms that grow in the play area.
- If a child is not experiencing severe symptoms but has touched or eaten a poisonous plant, berry, seed, bulb, or mushroom, contact your local poison center immediately at 1-800-222-1222.



COMBATING OVERDOSES

In the midst of an opioid epidemic, naloxone can prevent opioid overdose-related deaths, if administered in a timely manner. Naloxone is great to always have on hand because it can be given by anyone as it is easily sprayed in the nose. Be sure the person is lying on their back, then spray naloxone into one nostril.

Signs of an overdose:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint" pupils
- Loss of consciousness, limp body
- Slowed breathing
- Pale, blue, or cold skin
- Slowed heart rate

What to do if you think someone is overdosing:

1. Call **911** immediately.
2. Administer naloxone, if available.
3. Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
4. Lay the person on their side to prevent choking.
5. Stay with the person until emergency assistance arrives.



You can check with your local community service board, health department, and/or harm reduction sites for naloxone distribution.

Virginia Poison Center



For more information, visit our website at:
poison.vcu.edu

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HELP**
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