

# FIRST AID FOR POISONING

The Virginia Poison Center in Richmond, Virginia  
804-828-9123 or 800-222-1222

**ALWAYS CALL THE POISON CENTER IF YOU SUSPECT A POISONING.**

*The poison center's nurse will help determine if there is any risk to the victim, recommend the correct care to give, and advise whether the victim will need to be seen by a doctor. MOST cases of unintentional poisoning can be safely treated with only simple first aid.*

## Swallowed Poison . . .



Immediate first aid actions:

- ❖ **allow the victim to rest**
- ❖ **give not more than 2 ounces of water**

Do *not* give ipecac syrup or activated charcoal unless told to do so by the poison center. Try to get information about what has been swallowed, including the **TIME** it was taken, the **EXACT NAME** of the substance or medicine, and how **MUCH** has been swallowed. If a liquid chemical has been swallowed, have the victim rinse their mouth with water (and spit it out) several times. Call an ambulance if the victim is unconscious or having severe breathing difficulty. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

## Inhaled Poison . . .



Victims should be moved into fresh air and allowed to rest. Breathing in fresh air is the most important first aid. The room(s) in which the gas/vapor occurred should be ventilated with open windows, fans, etc. Count the number of breaths per minute. Remember that persons with respiratory diseases, especially asthma, may react to inhaled gas/vapor more severely than others. It may trigger an asthmatic attack in these persons regardless of whether they have been “poisoned” by the chemical(s) involved. First aid for asthma attacks caused by inhaled chemicals is the same as for asthma caused by other things. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

## Poison in the Eye . . .

Immediately rinse out the eye(s) with a gentle, steady stream of warm water for at least 15 minutes. This is very uncomfortable, and young children may not be able to cooperate. Help the victim to keep eyes OPEN as the rinsing is done: if this too difficult then encourage them to blink constantly as the eye is rinsed. Avoid eye drops. Do not delay eye rinsing...it is the single most important action to prevent corneal injury!



*Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

## Poison on the Skin . . .

Remove any clothing that has become contaminated by the substance(s). Wear latex gloves when handling these victims to avoid getting any of the poison on your skin. If the poison is a dry substance, try to gently brush off as much as possible before rinsing. Rinse the skin with a steady stream of tepid water for 5 to 10 minutes. Then wash the skin with mild soap, and rinse with lots of tepid water for another 5 minutes. *Contact the poison center for further treatment advice.*

**To order educational information, please contact:**

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VCU Medical Center  
PO Box 980522  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Business Line: (804) 828-4780

