Poison Prevention

FLASH CARDS
Each year, an estimated 4.7 million accidental poisonings occur. It is estimated that 50 percent occur in children under 6 years old. Poison prevention must be reinforced with teaching that begins at home and continues in school. Poison prevention is everyone’s concern!

The Pittsburgh Poison Center at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, together with educators, developed these Poison Prevention Flash Cards to show children the four forms of poison—solid, liquid, spray and invisible. Children must learn what poisons are, how they can get into the body and how to prevent poisonings from occurring. The cards can be used with one child, or in a group setting at school or at home.

Each card can be used as one lesson and can be reinforced with everyday products. Adults should teach children that everything is potentially poisonous, and sometimes just the amount can make something dangerous.
Mr. Yuk

POISON HELP!
1-800-222-1222

Sample — reproduction is not permitted
Objective
Children will learn about the poison-warning symbol called Mr. Yuk. It is used to teach kids about things that may be harmful to eat, drink, touch, taste and smell.

Key Points
• Poisons exist everywhere and can be found both inside and outside of the home.
• Mr. Yuk is a scowling green face used to make children aware of their poison center and its phone number. The phone number is printed around Mr. Yuk’s face.
• A poison center is the place to call when you think someone has swallowed or inhaled something that is not good for them.
• The poison center should be called anytime that a poisoning is suspected.
• The poison center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.
• Knowing a single number 1-800-222-1222 provides national toll-free access to the closest poison center.

Teaching Activities
✓ Hold up the Mr. Yuk card and ask the children if they know what it means.
✓ Ask them if they know what the phone number around the face is for. Teach them the number of their poison center.
✓ Discuss the role of the poison center.
Solids

DETERGENT
SOLIDS

Objective
To teach children that solids have many different shapes, colors and sizes and some can be harmful if they are not used properly. Children should not touch, taste or smell any solid they aren’t sure of. Teach children to ask an adult if a solid is safe first!

Key Points
• Solids come in all kinds of shapes, colors and sizes. Sometimes it is hard to tell whether a solid is good or bad by the ways it looks or feels. For example, although mothballs look like marshmallows, you can get sick if you eat them.
• Some solids feel like powder, like laundry detergent and flea powder. Only a grownup should touch these.
• The leaves, stems and berries of some plants are solids and can be poisonous. NEVER eat these, even if they look good. Lots of mushrooms grow outside but you should never pick them.
• Pills are solid and when people get sick, they might take a pill to help them feel better. Sometimes they are colorful and round like candy. Only an adult should give you pills because they can be dangerous.
• Some solids are gooey like Vaseline® or medicated ointments and should never be eaten.

Teaching Activities
✓ Children need to see the difference between things that are good to eat and things that are bad. To illustrate this point, place the following items in pairs on a table and ask each child which one is good to eat and which is bad. Keep a running tally to make it a game.
  Miniature marshmallows and mothballs
  M&M®’s and red pills
  Tube of cake icing and a tube of medicated ointment
  A box of baby cereal and a box of laundry detergent
✓ This shows how easily mistakes can be made because some things look alike but have very different uses.
Liquids
LIQUIDS

Objective
To help children understand that liquids can be thin, creamy, thick and sticky, and some are not meant for us to drink.

Key Points
• Liquids can be thin and clear like water or colorful like grape juice or cherry soda. Sometimes a colorful liquid like red cough medicine looks good, but it is not something to drink. Only a grownup can give it to you.

• Liquids can be creamy like suntan lotion. Dish detergents are thick, creamy and colorful and might look like something else that looks good, but don’t ever drink them. Only an adult should use suntan lotion and dish detergent.

• Liquids can be sticky like glue. In a tube or bottle, all glues should be used only when a grownup is near. NEVER put glue near your nose because the fumes can make you sick.

• It’s important to remember that just because a liquid is easy to swallow or smells good it may not be good to drink. Always ask a grownup before drinking anything.

Teaching Activities
✓ Show and tell is the best way to help children understand the different forms of liquids. Bring in examples of the different consistencies of liquids.

Thin Liquids — vinegar, soft drinks, nail polish remover

Thick Liquids — hand lotion, white glue, dish detergent

Ask the children if they know what is in each bottle. Pour some of each liquid into a clear cup. For variation, bring in products of the same color. Bring one safe product and one unsafe product. Examples: red cough medicine and cherry soda; blue window cleaner and a blue fruit drink.

It’s important to point out that no matter how much something might look good to drink, a child should never taste anything without asking an adult first!
SPRAYS

Objective
To help children understand what a spray is and that many sprays can be harmful.

Key Points
• A spray is like a fine stream of water. Sprays can come from a hose used to water the garden. Sprays also can come out of a container when you press a button.
• Some sprays called aerosols come out of a can really fast and hard. Aerosol sprays are so strong that it can hurt your eyes if any spray gets into them. Cans with aerosol sprays could explode or catch on fire.
• Another kind of spray is bug spray. Bug spray can help keep pesky flies or mosquitoes away but it can really hurt us if we spray it the wrong way. Never use a spray can. Go get an adult.
• Other sprays come in bottles with pumps on top. Spray pumps are hard to use because you have to press down on the pump a few times to make the liquid come out. Spray pumps are just as dangerous as aerosol sprays.

Teaching Activities
✓ To show the vast array of spray containers in the home, bring in a selection that can be found in different rooms of the house. Examples can be in pump or aerosol form.
  - Bedroom — bottle of spray cologne or perfume, a can of deodorant or hairspray
  - Bathroom — tile cleaner, shaving cream, toilet bowl or bathtub cleaner
  - Medicine cabinet — antiseptic mouth spray, medicated spray for cuts, sinus decongestant, breath spray
  - Kitchen — oven cleaner, cooking oil spray
  - Garage/basement — bug sprays, spray paints, fertilizers for garden, weed killer
  - Living room — furniture polish, air freshener
✓ Ask the children where else they might find a spray in their homes. What room? What does the container look like? Then, use each group of products to show some of the common sprays found in that particular room.
INVISIBLES

Objective
To help children understand that invisible poisons are harmful things we can’t see or taste. Carbon monoxide, which is a silent and deadly poison that can be found in many areas of the home, is the most well-known. Since we can’t see invisible poisons, you will have to show this lesson through pictures of common sources of invisible poisons.

Key Points
- Invisible poisons are usually found where something is burning. For example, when gasoline burns in a car engine, smoke and fumes from the gas can come out through the exhaust pipe in the back of the vehicle. If we get too close, we can breathe in the dangerous gas fumes.
- Never sit inside a car when it is parked inside a garage with the engine running. Even if the garage doors are open the fumes from the engine can still get into the car.
- Summer cookouts on a charcoal grill are great! But, did you know that charcoal gives off invisible poisons? That’s why grills should be used only outdoors and by an adult.
- Some sprays also can be invisible poisons because when the fine mist is sprayed it can’t be seen, and it can get into the eyes and lungs.
- A burning cigarette or pipe gives off invisible poisons that can get into the lungs if we get close and breathe the smoke. Any kind of smoking is harmful, so don’t smoke!

Teaching Activities
✓ Bring in some pictures of different objects that give off carbon monoxide.

Examples: outdoor grills with smoke, gas lanterns, cars, trucks, mopeds, motorcycles, a lit cigarette and/or cigar or pipe or a car running in a closed garage.

✓ After the children see the actual sources of carbon monoxide through pictures ask them if they can think of anything else inside or outside of the home that might be an invisible poison.
Use Mr. Yuk to teach your children about poisons and how to contact your poison center.

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