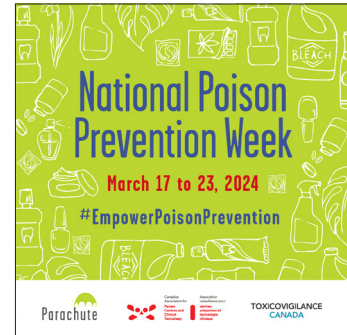




BACKGROUND

Poison Prevention Week – March 17 to 23, 2024

Poison Prevention Week is an annual national awareness campaign to draw attention to the causes of poisoning and how to prevent them from occurring. With many potential poisons – such as medications, household cleaners and cannabis products – in and around the home, it’s important to know how to safely store these items and what to do in the event of a poisoning.



The facts on poisoning

Unintentional poisoning is the third-leading cause of injury death in Canada. Each year, unintentional poisonings cost the healthcare system and Canadian society \$2.6 billion. These tragedies also have immeasurable costs to the individuals, families and communities affected.

On average, more than 4,000 people die due to poisoning every year in Canada. Thousands more are seen in emergency departments and admitted to hospital.

In 2021, Canada’s poison centres managed 187,068 poison exposure cases.

Children are particularly vulnerable to poisoning because of their small body size and lower weight. They are also curious and like to mimic behaviour they see in adults.

Poison prevention: Empowering Canada for a safer tomorrow

This year, partners across the country are joining forces to encourage all people in Canada to #EmpowerPoisonPrevention.

Recognize and identify potential poisons

There are many items in and around the home that can cause poisoning.

- **Medications are the leading cause of poisoning in Canada.** Prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause poisoning if taken by mistake or used incorrectly.



- **Household cleaners can be brightly coloured and appealing to children.** When mixed, household cleaners can produce dangerous chemicals.
- **Ingesting cannabis is the most common cause of cannabis poisoning in children.** Cannabis edibles often resemble common snacks (e.g., brownies, gummy candies). A young child may be unable to tell the difference.
- **Fragrant and brightly coloured personal care products such as perfume, mouthwash and hand sanitizer can be appealing to children.** These products often contain a high percentage of alcohol, which can be harmful to children if ingested. Store these products high and locked away from children's reach.



Take action to prevent poisoning

- **Know how to store potential poisons safely and prevent unintentional poisoning:** Store poisonous products high, locked and out of sight and keep products in their original, child-resistant packaging.
- **Follow directions and use products as they're meant to be used:** Always read the label and check the dosage each time you give or take medicine. Avoid mixing different cleaning products together.
- **Protect your household from carbon monoxide poisoning:** Install carbon monoxide alarms on every floor of your home and outside sleeping areas and replace the alarm according to manufacturer's instructions.



Know what to do in case of a poisoning

Having an action plan in place can help you and your family respond quickly in the event of a poisoning. Only 18 per cent of Canadians report knowing about local poison resources.

- **Possible poisoning? Call your local poison centre.** Canada has a toll-free 24/7 number for poison centres. If you suspect a poisoning, call **1-844-POISON-X (1-844-764-7669)**. If you are located in Nunavut, [contact your local health centre](#). If you are located in Québec, call 1-800-454-1212.
- **Keep the number of your poison centre nearby or in your phone.** Program the number into your phone's contact list or keep it in a visible location, such as on your fridge. In the event your child or someone else in your household is potentially poisoned, contact the poison information centre.

Help create a safer Canada

Everyone can help by reporting unsafe products and issues with medications:

- **Play a vital role in reducing medication incidents by [reporting them](#).** A medication incident, also known as a medication error, is a mistake with medication (e.g., receiving the wrong medication, dose or route of administration).
- **Health professionals are encouraged to [report adverse reactions and concerns about products](#).** Reporting is a critical part of the process to improve health product safety for all people in Canada.

For more information on how to [#EmpowerPoisonPrevention](#), visit these websites:

- Parachute – parachute.ca/poisoning
- Canadian Association for Poison Centres and Clinical Toxicology – infopoison.ca
- Health Canada – canada.ca/en/health-canada.html

