



Minnesota Poison Control System

www.mnpoison.org

Lesson 3: Safe Medication Use for Older Adults

Goal: The goal is to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to:

- ❖ Identify poisons
- ❖ Prevent poisonings
- ❖ Respond appropriately in poisoning emergencies

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to explain what a poison is.
2. Participants will be able to list examples of common poisons.
3. Participants will be able to list ways to prevent poisonings.
4. Participants will be able to describe the appropriate response in a poisoning emergency.

Discussion: If you are age 65 or older, you could be taking more medicines than younger adults. Your body may process these medicines more slowly, this means that the medicines stay in your system for longer periods of time. Today we will discuss ways you can prevent medication poisoning.

What is a poison? A poison is anything that can hurt you if it gets into your body. Poisons are found everywhere. Things that we use every day can be a poison. These include medicines you take to the products you use to clean your home.

How can medicine be a poison?

- ◆ If you take the wrong amount (eg, take 2 pills instead of 1)
- ◆ If you take it the wrong way (eg, drops placed in the eye instead of nose)
- ◆ If you take it at the wrong time (eg, take it every 4 hours instead of every 8 hours)
- ◆ If you take someone else's medicine (eg, taking your spouse's medicine)
- ◆ If you do not understand and do not follow the directions (eg, taken with food instead of on an empty stomach – some foods can react with medicines).

What are some ways to prevent medication poisoning?

- ◆ Learn the number to the Minnesota Poison Control System – 1-800-222-1222
- ◆ Keep medicines in the original containers
- ◆ If you wear glasses, put them on before you take your medicine
- ◆ Always turn the lights on before you take your medicine
- ◆ Keep a log to keep track of when to take your medicine
- ◆ Keep all medicines out of reach and sight of children (if children are in the home or visit often)
- ◆ If you forget to take your medicine, call your doctor or the Poison Center before taking a double dose.
- ◆ Keep your medicine in a separate area from other people's medicine.
- ◆ If you take herbal medicines, vitamins or any over the counter medicines, let your doctor know
- ◆ Throw out old or expired medicines. Call the Poison Center for correct disposal.
- ◆ Call the Poison Center with any questions about your medicine.



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Lesson 3 (continued):

Help is just a phone call away, if you or someone you know should swallow or inhale a poison or get poison on the skin or in the eye, call toll free at 1-800-222-1222

******Note: If a person is non-responsive, has difficulty breathing, is not breathing, or is having seizures call 9-1-1 immediately******

(You may copy and distribute the Medication Tracker [located under Adult Lesson Plans and Activities in the Resource Center]. Discuss the chart with the audience to make sure everyone understands how to complete it.)