

Poison in the house

Providence Hospital examines ways to avoid tragedy

More than one million accidental poisonings occur each year in the U.S. and most of the victims are children, says Robert Tucker, coordinator of drug and poison information at Providence Hospital in Southfield.

During Poison Prevention Week — March 15 through 21 — Tucker urges homeowners to check their homes for hazardous substances and they can act quickly in the event of a poisoning.

According to the National Clearinghouse for Poison Control Centers (NCPCC), poisoning causes some 13,000 deaths each year and many thousands of cases of permanent disability or prolonged illness.

The real tragedy, says Tucker, is that most of those deaths could have been prevented. He offers several

suggestions for poison prevention and for treatment in poisoning occurs.

Poisoning can occur in three ways — by ingestion, inhalation or skin contact. Children under the age of 5 are the most frequent victims of poisoning by swallowing a toxic substance, Tucker said.

According to the NCPCC, the items most frequently involved in poisoning are:

- Plants, which account for nearly one out of eight cases.
- Soaps, detergents and cleaning products.
- Perfumes, cologne and toilet water.
- Antihistamines and cold medications.
- Vitamins and minerals.

A FEW SIMPLE precautions can

help reduce the possibility of an accidental poisoning in your home, the experts say.

If your home has many plants, label the bottom of each container with the name of the plant so it can readily be identified in an emergency.

Keep all household cleaning products and hazardous substances out of the reach of children.

Keep all medication in properly labeled containers. Do not mix different tablets in the same bottle — identification and subsequent treatment will be more difficult.

Because young children are more likely to eat a poisonous substance when they are hungry, be sure they are carefully supervised during the hours before lunch and dinner.

Keep a one-ounce bottle of syrup of ipecac, which can be purchased at any pharmacy without a prescription, in the home for emergency use.

Immediate medical attention is required for many poisonings, including those containing corrosive substances found in lye-base products, automatic dishwasher detergents, drain cleaners, rust removers and some cleaning agents.

Ingestion of these substances will cause severe burning and pain around the lips and mouth and in the throat and stomach. Vomiting and diarrhea with evidence of bleeding may occur. Difficulty in swallowing and breathing is common.

IF THE VICTIM is conscious and

able to swallow, the experts say one or two glasses of milk may be given. Under no circumstances should the patient be made to vomit, because this causes further burning and tissue damage. The victim should be immediately taken to the nearest hospital emergency room for evaluation and treatment.

Also requiring immediate medical attention are poisonings from aspirin, aspirin substitutes, amphetamines, antidiarrhea preparations, cough and cold remedies, sleeping pills, barbiturates, tranquilizers, antidepressants, vitamins and other preparations containing iron.

Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, flushing of the skin, dry mouth, changes in heart and breathing rate, changes in the size of the pupil of the eye, seizures, mental confusion and coma. Do not induce vomiting, Tucker says, unless directed by a poison control center.

If the poison control center advises that vomiting be induced, the following guidelines are suggested for the proper administration of syrup of ipecac.

For children one to 12 years old, one tablespoon of syrup of ipecac is given with a full glass of water. Syrup of ipecac generally is not recommended for children under one year old.

The adult dose is two tablespoons with a full glass of water.

If vomiting does not occur within 20 minutes, the dose for children and adults should be repeated once. If this does not produce vomiting, the individ-

ual should be immediately taken to the nearest emergency facility, the experts advise.

Serious poisoning also can result from inhaling gaseous substances. The most dangerous is usually considered to be carbon monoxide. When inhaled, it produces headache, confusion, shortness of breath, nausea, impaired judgement, paleness or bluish discoloration

of the skin and fainting.

Victims should be taken to a well-ventilated area and encouraged to breathe deeply. If the person is unconscious, he or she should be taken to the hospital at once.

The Providence Hospital Poison Control Center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer questions about any kind of poisoning. The telephone number is 424-3456.

Student receives LIT scholarship

John M. McLoughlin of Farmington has been awarded an Arthur F. Underwood Scholarship by Lawrence Institute of Technology.

The scholarships are funded by the retired director of the General Motors Research Laboratories and are awarded annually to two outstanding engi-

neering students at LIT. The students must be maintaining a good academic record and display an interest in the automotive engineering field.

McLoughlin, a 1977 graduate of Farmington High School, is an electrical engineering student at LIT.

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