



# POISON ALERT BULLETIN

Volume 1 Issue 1

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## About The Poison Alert Bulletin

The CARPIN Bulletin is a quarterly publication which will highlight CARPIN's work and progress. It will give information on various topics affecting the Caribbean and the wider World with regards to poisons. Included in the issues will be reports of incidents of poisoning in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries where available. It is hoped that the bulletin will enlighten readers and heighten poison awareness..... CARPIN

'Protecting Against Poisonings'.

Message: Michael Tucker, Chairman



After 2 years of operation, the Caribbean Poison Information Network, CARPIN, continues to focus on its mission to make poison information more readily available, create general awareness of poisons and associated danger, and provide information on how to manage poison cases. There continues to be a significant focus on public education with workshops being held in strategic parts of the country, and a workshop planned for the Cayman Islands in association with the Caribbean Association of Pharmacists towards the end of October. Public service announcements have also been prepared for both radio and television and will be aired in the near future. The work of the Agency is essential and there has been significant outreach for volunteers from all walks of life to come onboard and work with the small but dynamic team in spreading the important information about poisons that affect especially our young.

We look forward to greater cooperation and collaboration in the near future with key stakeholders and the cadre of volunteers to increase our outreach and impact on the case of poisons that present themselves.

## What is a Poison?

According to (Paracelsus 1493-1541), famous Toxicologist, 'All things are poison and nothing is without poison; only the dose makes a thing a poison'. What is sure about poisons is that when introduced into or absorbed by a living organism may destroy life or injure health.

Poison fall in many categories as listed below:

## Poison Categories

### 1. Natural Poisons

Example: Plants and animals

### 2. Agricultural Poisons

Example: Pesticides, Fertilisers

### 3. Environmental/Industrial Poisons

Example: Heavy metals i.e. lead mercury etc

### 4. Medicinal Poisons

Example: Pharmaceuticals products

### 5. Household Poisons

Example: Bleach and disinfectant

The focus for this issue will be poisonous plants in Jamaica and how to avoid poisoning. Look inside the issue to see what's included.

## Poisonous Plants of Jamaica

Plants are beautiful. Many persons create their own little haven of flowers around the home. Although beautiful and calming some plants are poisonous. Poisonous plants should be kept out of the reach of children and certain precautions should be taken to ensure that plants are used with care and caution by adults.



## What makes a plant poisonous?

Firstly plants have different levels of toxicity. Some may cause serious poisoning and some mild symptoms of poisoning and some produce only poisoning.

All parts of a plant can be poisonous. It is easy to be deceived by plants, one part may be edible while another part is poisonous. Plants are beautiful but can be

**DANGEROUS!**

**Plants are beautiful but can be Dangerous!**

Here is a list of poisonous plants that are commonly found in Jamaica:



### Dumb Cane

Dumb cane contains oxalic acid. The sap from the leaves or stem irritating to the mucous membrane.



### Periwinkle

All parts of the plant contain several active alkaloids of the indole type, especially its root bark.



### French Cotton

The latex of this plant is poisonous and is associated with steroidal cardiac toxins

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**Anthurium**



The leaves and stems contain insoluble calcium oxalate needles, as well as various protein toxins.

**Oleander**



All parts of the plant are poisonous.

**White Sage**



The leaves contain triterpene acids which may cause deleterious effects.



• **Ackee**

The immature fruit is responsible for Jamaican “vomiting sickness.” The hypoglycaemic substance hypoglycin, an unusual amino acid is present in the arillus of the unripe fruit and causes lowering of blood sugar and depleting glycogen reserves. Brain and liver damage may result, even death. The ripe fruit only has a small amount of hypoglycin, which when boiled is discarded with the pot water. Persons who are malnourished are more susceptible to its effects especially if they are riboflavin deficient. The seeds also contain hypoglycin.

**Safe Plants For the Home**

**Corn Plant**



**Balsam**



Also some plants that are used as food, for example:-

• **Cassava**



**Spider Plant**



**Bougainvillea**



**Coleus**



**Hibiscus**



The tubers of the both varieties (bitter and sweet), contains cyanogens, for in different proportions. Bitter cassava contains doses of this substance which can be considered unsafe, while sweet cassava is safe since the proportion of cyanogens is safe for human consumption.

However proper processing can result in a safe and tasty meal. Poisoning by inhalation, ingestion, and other means (eye, skin), can result.

**General Tips to Prevent Plant Poisonings**

- ◆ Know the name of the plants in your home and its surroundings. Label all of your plants.
- ◆ Keep poisonous plants out of the reach of children and pets.
- ◆ Teach children not to put leaves and berries growing in the yard in their mouths.

**What to do in the event of Poisoning?**

- Stay calm
- Remove the uneaten plant material from the victim’s mouth.
- Find out how much of the plant and which part has been eaten.
- Check victim for reactions such as irritation, cuts, redness, swelling, blisters, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- If vomiting occurs ensure that the person does not inhale the vomitus. Let the person vomit in a container or sink so you can bring the sample of the vomited material to the doctor for identification of the poison.
- If the victim is unable to speak, try to identify the plant by retracing the victim’s steps or checking for any damaged plant.
- Call the poison control center, hospital, clinic or physician. Be prepared with information regarding: reactions, age, weight of patient, and type of plant ingested.
- If you have to visit any of the above mentioned places, take a sample of the plant with you.



## CARPIN and its Progress

The network, managed by a committee of representatives from several entities, was officially launched on Friday, May 13, 2005 during the inaugural Poison Prevention Week. The Network aims at setting up Sentinel sites through out Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean region where data will be collected.

### Functions

- Collecting data from Sentinel Sites
- Generating reports
- Disseminating information
- Generating publications on issues related to poisonings
- Carrying out research
- Initiating education and training

### Services Offered

- Responding to queries on poisonings.
- Data gathering, analysis

and generation of reports.

- Dissemination of information to the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), the public, governments and other users.
- Generation of publications on issues related to poisoning.
- Facilitating research projects.
- Initiation and delivery of education and training programmes.

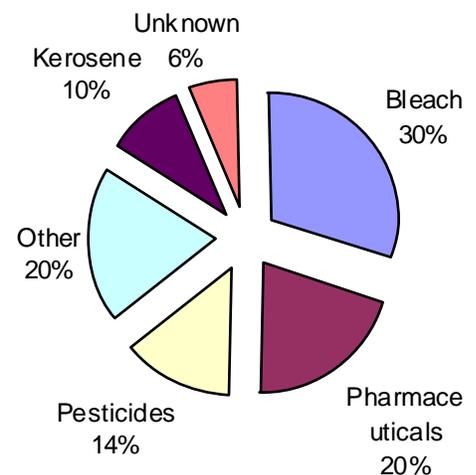
### Achievements:

Funding secured for three (3) years

- Six (6) Island States have made commitment to participate in the initiative
- Participation in public education Expo.
- Hosting Poison Prevention Week since 2005- schools poster competition, community outreach/ education, seminar and Network launch.

- Work initiated with schools
- Nerve Center operations have begun with link to University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI).
- Nerve Center approved as an Internship site for Pharmacy Interns
- Training
- Hospitals, Health Centers and Pharmacies have been targeted as Sentinel Sites
- Volunteers have committed to work with CARPIN

### Accidental Poisoning Cases by Causative Agent Jamaica 2006



Source: MOH HPPD/Surveillance Unit 2007

## WHAT'S YOUR POISON?

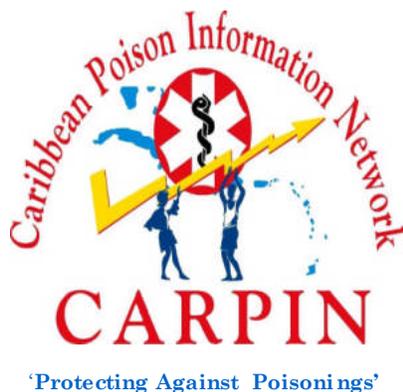
There's this guy sitting at a bar, just looking at his drink. He stays like that for half an hour. Then this big trouble-making truck driver steps next to him, takes the drink from the guy, and drinks it all down.

The poor man starts crying. The truck driver says: "Come on man, I was just joking. Here, I'll buy you another drink. I just can't stand to see a man crying."

"No, it's not that. This is the worst day of my life. First, I fall asleep, and I'm late to my office. My boss, outraged, fires me. When I leave the building, to go to my car, I find out it was stolen. The police say they can do nothing. I get a cab to return home, and when I leave it, I remember I left my wallet and credit cards there but the cab had already driven away. I go home, and when I get there, I find my wife in bed with the gardener. I leave home and come to this bar. And when I'm thinking about putting an end to my life, you show up and drink my poison . . ."

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## CARPIN JUMBLE

Unscramble the words below. Then solve the phrase by arranging the letters in the circle. Use the pictures on the right for clues.

### Poisons & the Environment

TSEPCIDIS

O □ □ O □ □ O □ □ O

SNEFCSDITLATN

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ZENOO

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RAGEAG

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MRUPLETOE

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PSLSLI

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**SOLVE** ' OOOOOOOOOOOOO OOOOOOOO  
OOOOOOOOOOOOO '