

Poison Insider

A Newsletter for Health Care Professionals



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of the "Poison Insider", a Newsletter produced by the Education Committee of the Caribbean Poison Information Network (CARPIN).

The newsletter which is intended for Health Professional seeks to raise the awareness of the epidemiology of poisoning in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. In addition, it will provide useful information on issues relating to prevention and management of poison cases and exposure to toxic substances.

Poison exposures pose significant dangers to children, particularly, those under the age of five years old. The information about the occurrences of poisonings and even the dangers certain substances cause in accidental cases is usually under-reported.

Data available at the Surveillance Unit, Ministry of Health, Jamaica, name the primary causative agents as common household and medicinal products and an agricultural agent. These agents were identified as bleach, kerosene oil, pharmaceuticals and pesticides. Although the causative agents vary in other Caribbean countries, the population most commonly affected appears quite similar.

We hope to use this medium to educate, inform and motivate our audience to become agents of change in the efforts to reduce poisonings and promote healthy practices in the homes and our environment.

The Newsletter will be published bi-annually. We hope that each issue will achieve our objective of providing you with informative and interesting reading. Please take the journey with us as we wish you the greatest satisfaction with this publication.

ROLE OF PHARMACISTS IN POISON PREVENTION

Medications have the potential to harm persons and in some cases, if used inappropriately or taken incorrectly, produce very toxic effects. Household chemicals such as cleaning agents, fuels, and pesticides may also have toxic effects.



Pharmacists, in recognition of these potential health dangers and their role as health care professionals, provide educational information to the public about poison prevention and also provide access to treatment in a poisoning emergency.

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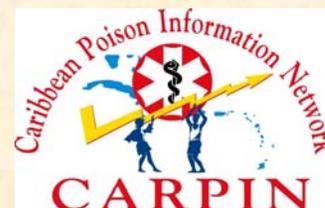
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"Protecting Against Poisoning"

The controversy surrounding Syrup of Ipecac

Syrup of Ipecac, an emetic derived from two plants (*Cephaelis acuminata* and *C. ipecacuanha*), was approved in October 1965 by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as a safe and effective over the counter treatment of poisoning. For more than forty years Syrup of Ipecac has been used both in the hospital setting and domestically in the management of poisonings.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) ushered in a new era when it announced its new guideline on syrup of ipecac. The AAP determined that syrup of Ipecac no longer has a place in the management of poisoning cases. Noting that use of syrup of ipecac had not been associated with improvement in patient outcome, the AAP recommended that parents no



longer keep syrup of ipecac in the home and that they throw away any they may have on hand. Additionally, there was the problem of ipecac having a negative influence in the clinical management of poisonings due to effects of delaying the administration of activated charcoal.

Ipecac-induced emesis is characterized by prolonged vomiting which inhibits the use of activated charcoal in poison management. The onset for vomiting is usually 15-30 minutes and can last 1-2 hours potentially delaying any additional efforts for poison management intervention. Ipecac syrup can remove about one-third of the stomach contents if given within the first hour after a substance is swallowed. However it does not completely remove a toxin from the stomach as it has been found that tablets often remain in the stomach after a bout of ipecac-induced vom-

iting. Ipecac has also been known to be abused by individuals with eating disorders.

A study done by the Bond Group concluded that selective home administration of syrup of ipecac will not improve outcome or reduce use of emergency department services and that if syrup of ipecac does not play a significant role in reducing emergency department visits, it is unlikely to play a significant role in injury prevention.

With the advent of such information, early and effective treatment after a poisoning event is a priority. In the case of a poisoning, it is advised that Ipecac syrup not be used and instead immediate contact be made with the local poison control center or an emergency medical facility.

Poisonous House Plant – Dumb cane

Houseplants can be very beneficial in our lives. They purify and renew our stale indoor air by filtering out toxins, pollutants and the carbon dioxide we exhale - replacing them with life sustaining oxygen.!



DUMB CANE-
Dieffenbachia seguine

However, many of our most popular houseplants are very toxic. If you have this houseplant, it may pose a risk to your children or pets.

Here is a little about this common household Plant, **DUMBCANE**

“Dumbcane” comes from the 19th-century practice of forcing slaves to eat the plant’s leaves, causing swelling, pain, and temporary loss of speech. The larynx would swell making breathing difficult and speaking impossible.

Common names

Dumbcane, Spotted Dumbcane, Leopard Lily, Money Plant.

Botanical name *Dieffenbachia* sp.

Toxic Effects

Dumb cane contains oxalic acid. The sap from the leaves or stem is irritating to the mucous membrane. Contact with the eye or tongue results in pain, swelling and inflammation that takes days or weeks to subside and if sufficiently serious result in death.

Treatment

Lime juice is used as a quick relief from the oral swelling. Antihistamines, local analgesics and cool beverages provide adequate relief. Severe cases may need hospitalization to assist in breathing.

HOW TO HANDLE A POISON INCIDENT?

A poisoning is potentially life threatening situation that requires prompt and appropriate action.

The following information is a guide if you suspect someone has been poisoned:

If you suspect someone has swallowed a poison or an overdose of drugs and they appear to be unconscious, try to rouse them.

If they have pills in their mouth, try to get them to spit them out. You can give them to the hospital staff to help identify the cause of poisoning.

Seek emergency medical care or contact your local Poison Control Center.

“If they have pills in their mouth, try to get them to spit it out. You can give them to hospital staff to help identify the cause of poisoning”

Have the following information available:

1. The name of the substance swallowed, known; keep the container and a note of how much has been consumed if possible
2. The person's age and estimated weight
3. The estimated time that the poison was swallowed.
4. Whether or not the person has vomited.
5. whether the person suffers from any chronic illness (e.g. heart disease) or takes any medication.

Inhalation of poisonous fumes

If you suspect that someone has inhaled poisonous fumes, First:

1. Assess the situation and your risk.
2. If possible, remove the person from the contaminated area before starting first aid treatment.
3. Avoid inhaling fumes yourself by taking two or three deep breaths before you enter the area and holding your breath until you are clear.
4. Once away from the affected area, check the person's **ABC** (airway, breathing and circulation).
5. If the person is not breathing, begin CPR (if you know how to do so). Call out for assistance and ask someone else to call for emergency medical assistance.

Dust off.....Not just Air



For those of you who don't know, Dust Off is one of the leading brands of aerosol computer cleaning products, which has been recently associated with inhalant abuse or "Huffing".

The issue of inhalant abuse and its link to Dust Off was brought to the forefront after a 14 year old boy died from the effects of inhaling the contents of a can of Dust-Off compressed—air cleaning spray, also known as "canned air".

The young users of these products, who are in most cases the victims, are completely unaware that it can cause death. Canned air does not have a cumulative effect, which makes the product even more lethal.

Dust-Off and other aerosol computer cleaning products contains a liquefied gas called chlorodifluoromethane which is responsible for the slight euphoric sensation often experienced when inhaled.

Chlorodifluoromethane acts by displacing oxygen in the blood, which induces CNS depression and related symptoms.

Potential Health Effects -

Inhalation of high concentrations of vapor is harmful and may cause heart irregularities, unconsciousness or death.

Intentional misuse or deliberate inhalation may cause death without warning. Vapor reduces oxygen available for breathing and is heavier than air.

Contact with the liquid may cause frostbite.

Overexposure by inhalation may include nonspecific discomfort, such as nausea, headache, or weakness, or temporary nervous system depression with anesthetic effects such as dizziness, headache, confusion, incoordination, and loss of consciousness. may occur from gross overexposure.

POISON PREVENTION WEEK 2006

Poison Prevention Week (PPW) 2006 plans to be both exciting and informative. The theme for this year is _____ . The week runs from Sunday, May 28 to Sunday June 4. The list of activities planned for the week are:

- **Sunday May 28:** Church Service and Launch of Week
- **Monday May 29 and Tuesday May 30:** Judging of School 's Competitions
- **Wednesday May 31 and Thursday June 1:** Community Outreach programs
- **Saturday June 3 and Sunday June 4:** First Annual Conference under the theme:

“Poison Awareness, Everybody's Business”

Terra Nova Hotel, Kingston, Jamaica

ROLE OF PHARMACISTS IN POISON PREVENTION *(continued from page 1)*

With a fundamental commitment to poison control, more pharmacists now play an active role in poison prevention. Yet, pharmacists have a long history of involvement in poison prevention. They provide an important function in poison control centers, universities, hospitals and consulting firms by serving as the individuals who respond to emergency questions and suggests action plans regarding poisonous chemicals, hazardous toxins or harmful drug interactions. They also play a role in overall administrative and clinical management of the poison information center.

The Pharmacist is the most accessible individual within the health care profession, thus having with the added advantage of establishing and supporting national and local community projects aimed at disseminating information and educating the public on Poison Prevention.

Pharmacists also serve as a support system for victims of poisonings. Thereby assisting them to develop a follow-up system which is essential for effective poison control.

With such a strategic position in society, the pharmacist is able to play a key role in poison prevention and ultimately influence the number of poisoning cases.

Find the Antidote!!

The antidote for the following poisons are embedded in this cross word puzzle. Can you find them? What is the antidote for poisoning due to:

1. Paracetamol
2. Morphine
3. Methanol
4. Carbon monoxide
5. Lorazepam
6. Malathion
7. Physostigmine
8. Lead
9. Heparin
10. Isoniazid
11. Iron
12. Warfarin



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L F Y U P D F F G H J K L E S
O L C A X R T Y A L E U N D E
N U D K L O O D S M T I A B N
A M O E C X S T I E E G L O I
H A F F F Y R X A T O H O O X
T Z R Y U E O F S M A P X N O
E E U I M D R Y B O I Y O F D
E N P O I U C O V J G N N C I
A I I L Y L M G X E O O E E R
O L A P Y A A C N A N H T Y Y
G R G T O T T U M D M O X E P
P I E I Q R X J Z L L I O L I
A C D Y T U T L G U Y U N J G
A P H Y T O N A D I O N E E I
H E D T A P H N E P I S H N L
    
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