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Household Poisons



How can medications cause poisoning?

Medications:

Poisoning can occur as a result of an overdose of any medication, which can happen accidentally, especially in children, or intentionally, as in suicide attempts.

What is Paracetamol toxicity?

Paracetamol poisoning is one of the most common causes of overdose of household medications. It could happen through suicide attempts or through unintended overdose which could occur due to the patient's misunderstanding of the dose. The maximum dose of paracetamol is **4000 mg** for adults, which is equivalent to **8 capsules** per day.

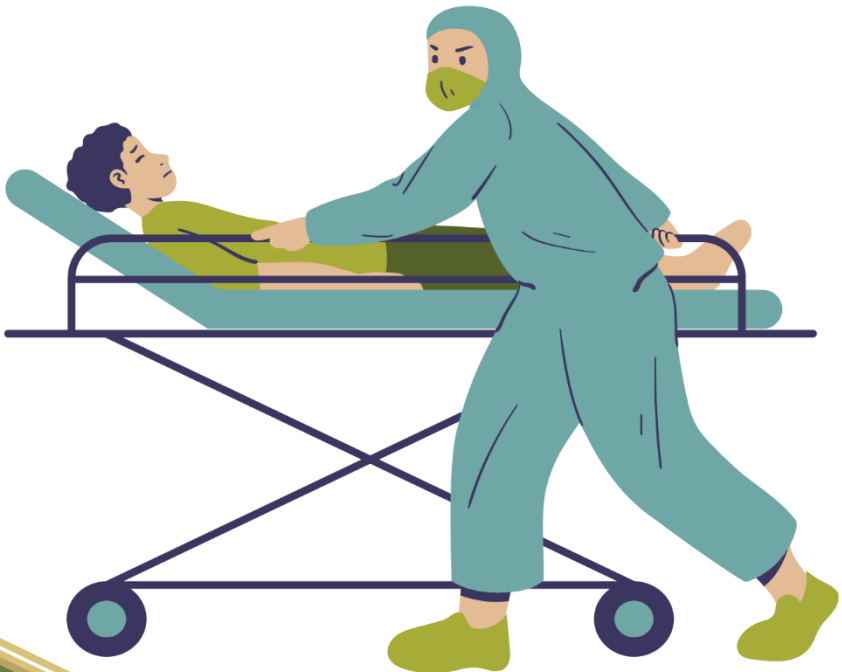


What is Paracetamol toxicity?

Unfortunately, there is not much to be done to help the patient at home. It is important that the patient be brought to hospital as soon as he or she finds out he or she is overdosed for any medication.



The sooner the patient is brought into the ER, the greater the chances of full recovery.



What types of cleaning products can cause poisoning ?

Acid and alkaline substances ingestion:

Acid and alkaline substances are both very dangerous because they can erode through metal or human tissues. All these products are toxic and can cause poisoning by ingestion, cause burns through skin contact, when touching the eye or by inhaling powerful fumes, especially when various detergents are mixed together.

Strong alkalis are found in products such as:

- Oven cleaners.
- Alkalis (caustic soda or sodium hydroxide).
- Sewage cleaners.
- Toilet cleaners.
- Rust removers.

What types of cleaning products can cause poisoning ?

Cleaners and bleach:

The detergents vary and symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and simple diarrhea may cause serious poisoning and tails depending on the cleaner's concentration in the amount swallowed.



What types of cleaning products can cause poisoning ?

Polishes and candles:

Polishes and candles often contain furniture glosses and candles or chemicals called **hydrocarbons**, such as: mineral oils as a solvent, can cause cough swallowing and vomit and a oily material enters the lungs which can cause pneumonia, serious breathing problems.

Furthermore, several polish materials and candles are packed into compressed aerosol cans and must be protected from extreme heat to prevent explosions.



What should you do if you suspect poisoning?

The main goal of first aid for a poisoned person is to reduce the toxic substance as quickly as possible, seek medical assistance and maintain safety breathing, circulation and other vital functions of the poisoned person.

In order to perform first aid correctly:

- Make sure that there is no additional danger (to you or to the injured person) as a result of you providing first aid to the injured person.
- If the suspected poison is a household cleaner or other chemical, read the label on the container and follow the instructions in the case of accidental poisoning.



What should you do if you suspect poisoning?

- **If the poison was taken orally:** try to remove what was left in the mouth without inducing vomiting to avoid causing aspiration into the lungs.
- **When the poison is inhaled:** the victim must immediately be transported from the gas-filled atmosphere or toxic vapor to fresh air, freeing the body from compressed clothing and remove the neck tie.



What should you do if you suspect poisoning?

- **Contamination of the skin:** The skin must be washed with a stream of flowing water, with the victim's clothes removed while the skin continued to be washed with water, and then the skin was washed well with water and soap. Don't put any chemical or medication on the injured skin, because this might worsen the skin injury.



What should you do if you suspect poisoning?

- **Contamination of the eyes:** The eyelids must be opened by hand while the eyes are washed with running water (low pressure) for at least 10 minutes, don't use eyedrops.
- **If the victim pukes:** turn their head to the side to avoid aspiration and choking.
- Call for an ambulance or medical aid to transport the injured person.
- **If they are unconscious:** breathing must be examined and CPR must be provided if necessary.



What should you do if you suspect poisoning?

- Specify the type of poison, medication or substance and bring it to the hospital in a plastic bag if it's not unsafe.
- Know the dose or amount of the substance used.
- Know the time of ingestion or exposure.



Are there misconceptions regarding household poisons?

Common misconception:

"If poison is ingested, you must force the person to puke immediately"

This is wrong because vomiting could be more dangerous, due to some toxins that can be sustained at low doses through ingestion but can cause bigger complications if the poison was aspirated into the lungs through vomiting.



How to avoid poisoning incidents?

- Maintain all medicines in a home pharmacy (a medicine cabinet) and ensure that they are placed in a high place where children do not have access.
- Drugs should not be stored outside their original packaging.
- Do not suggest to the child that medications are a type of candy or are compare it to them.
- Keep the medications away from moisture, heat and sunlight.



How to avoid poisoning incidents?

- Refrain strictly from mixing any household cleaner especially if they contain bleach.
- Don't take medication in front of your child
- Ensure that the place is ventilated during cleaning with bleach-containing products.
- Storage of household detergents in a safe place beyond the reach of children.
- Wear masks and protective clothing when dealing with chemicals.



Resources and references:

All pictures used from [canva.com](https://www.canva.com)

Review and audit:

Content of this booklet has been reviewed by Emergency Medicine
Department consultant at King Fahad University Hospital.

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