

Poison Prevention Lesson Plan

Overview:

Students will learn about the problem of poisonings in the United States. The lesson and activities are geared to teach poison prevention. The discussion focuses on incidents that occur in the home and is appropriate in preparing students for preventing poisonings from happening.

Description of Problem:

Almost two million poisonings are reported to poison centers in the United States each year. More than 90% of these poisonings happen at home and greater than 50% involve children ages 6 years and younger. The most common exposures in this age group are caused by exposure to cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning products, pain medication, plants, cough and cold medicines, pesticides, and vitamins.

Prevention is the key to reducing the incidence and severity of poison exposures. Elementary school aged children can play an important role in poison prevention. Their level of responsibility in the home, in addition to the desire to be more independent and helpful, provides an opportunity for them to raise awareness of the entire family of the poisoning problem. This prevention lesson and home assignment will enable the student to alert family members to potentially dangerous substances and their general location in the home.

The following lesson plans, for kindergarten through third grade, have been provided to assist you in teaching poison prevention. Each lesson includes an age appropriate activity to do in class. All plans include a home assignment that requires the student to identify poisons in each room in the house and take steps to “poison proof” the home.

Suggested Time Allotment for Plan

Preparation time: 30 minutes to review material; 20 minutes to prepare activity sheets
Classroom time: 20 minutes for grades K-1, up to 45 minutes for grades 2 and 3
Home assignment: 30 minutes to “poison proof” the home

Materials Included in Lesson Plan:

- 4 forms of Poison Illustrations
- Mr. Yuk Face and Happy “Safe” face
- Letter to Parents
- Poison Proofing Checklist (home assignment worksheet)
- Certificate of Completion

Note: Some activities suggest the use of containers of household products and medicines. Use only empty, rinsed containers. Never use product containers that contain any substance.

What is Poison?

Objectives:

- To define a poison as something that can make you sick and hurt you.
- To familiarize children with the 4 different forms of poison.
- To describe a poison as something that should not be tasted, smelled, or touched without asking a parent or caregiver first.
- To make children aware of places in the home where poisons can be found.

Method:

Ask: “Who can tell me what a poison is?”

Take suggestions from several children.

Answer: A poison is anything that will cause harm to a person or animal if it is:

1. Used the wrong way

Example: Mom is cleaning the bathroom but her usual cleaner doesn't seem to be cleaning the tub very well. She remembers that she bought a new type of cleaner last time she went to the store so she decides to try that. She pours the cleaner into the tub but, all of a sudden, her eyes start to burn and she starts to cough.

The problem: Mixing different cleaning products can cause a real problem.

The solution: Always read the label before using any product to make sure that you use it the right way.

2. Used by the wrong person

Example: Your ear hurts and the doctor gives you some of that pink bubblegum flavored medicine that tastes really good. The pharmacist tells your mom that she should keep the medicine in the refrigerator.

The problem: Your little brother likes the bubblegum flavored medicine too and when he finds it in the fridge he drinks it, even though he's not sick.

The solution: Never take medicine that belongs to someone else. Always read the label and follow the directions. Keep medicines locked away from young children. (If medicine needs to be kept in the refrigerator, you could lock it in a tackle box, or buy a child safety lock for the refrigerator).

3. Used in the wrong amount

Example: You go on a camping trip with your family and you need to take some medicine. The label says that you should take 2 teaspoonfuls but Mom forgot to bring the measuring spoon so you decide to just guess how much to take and drink a big mouthful.

The problem: Medicine only works if you use it the right way. Never guess how much to take – read the label and take exactly that amount the directions say.

The solution: If you know you have to take medicine, check to make sure that you have a way to measure it – don't guess!

Activity idea: Have some empty household cleaner and medicine containers available and have children look at the labels and discuss the directions and any warnings.

Remember to use only empty, rinsed containers. Never use product containers that contain any substance.

What Does Poison Look Like?

Activity:

Gather an assortment of packages from poisonous products (or pictures of products) to illustrate the 4 forms of poison:

1. **Solid** (e.g. pills, rat poison)
2. **Liquid** (e.g. mouthwash, bleach)
3. **Spray** (e.g. furniture polish, bug spray)
4. **Gas/invisible** (picture of car with exhaust fumes,)

Method:

Ask: Take a look around at the other members of our class – do you all look the same?

Answer: Of course not! You have different colored hair and eyes and are different shapes and sizes. It's the same way with poison – it comes in different forms.

Show: Products demonstrating the 4 forms of poison one at a time and ask the children to tell you what form of poison they take. You may also ask for suggestions of other products that would fit into that category, (e.g. **gasoline - liquid**, plants – solids, **fumes from a gas furnace - gases**, hairspray - sprays).

Say: Poisons come in all shapes, sizes and colors. Poisons can be solids, like a pill or plant or they can be liquids like some cleaning supplies. Some poisons come in spray bottles. Other poisons can be gases, which we can't see. Poison can even look pretty or smell good.

Ask: Can you think of something in your home that could be a poison and it's a pretty color or smells good?

Take suggestions from several children.

Answer: Products like air fresheners, perfume, cleaning products, plants and flowers, etc.

Activity: Identifying Poisons

Materials:

2 large brown paper bags

Pictures of poisonous and nonpoisonous products cut out of old magazines or clean, empty containers (enough for each pair).

Mr. Yuk face

A large happy face with the word "Safe"

Preparation:

1. Draw and color the faces and attach the "Safe" happy face to one of the large paper bags. Attach the Mr. Yuk face to the other.
2. Cut out pictures from a magazine or make your own pictures of poisonous and non-poisonous items.

Instruction: Hold each picture up and ask if it is a poison or not. This can be tricky and may need to be explained. For example, toothpaste is okay to brush your teeth with, but should never be swallowed. Vitamins are safe if you take one every day, but not if you eat a large amount. Have the children take turns putting the poisons in the "Mr. Yuk" bag and the products that are safe in the "Safe" bag.

Activity: - Poison Musical Chairs

Description:

This activity involves a version of "Musical Chairs", in which children identify poisonous and non-poisonous products.

Materials:

1. Chairs
2. Music

Preparation:

Find pictures of poisonous and non-poisonous items in magazines or draw and make your own pictures of poisons. Examples might include pictures of nail polish remover, a gasoline can, a paint can, mouthwash, bleach bottle, ammonia bottle, apple, a prescription bottle, toilet bowl cleaner, glass cleaner, a hotdog, rat poison, cherries, a cake, a hamburger, a plant, a soda can, etc.

Randomly tape one picture on the seat of each chair. Arrange the chairs in a circle.

Instructions:

- Ask children to sit down on a chair. When the music starts they can begin marching around the chairs. When the music stops, they should sit in the closest chair.
- Children sitting on a chair with a picture of a poison when the music stops, should hold up the picture and say why they think it's a poison. Remove that chair from the circle.

- Children sitting on a non-poison picture should continue to play the game. The game ends when all of the poison pictures and their chairs have been removed.

After all of the poison pictures and their chairs have been removed and the game is over, all children should sit in their seats. Discuss the definition of poison and stress the importance of not touching, tasting, or smelling poison before checking with an adult if you're not sure.

Stress again the importance of only taking medicine from a trusted adult.

Where can Poison Be Found?

Ask: “Who can tell me where you might find a poison in or outside of your home?”

Answer: Poisons can be found in every room in your home. They can be found in your kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living room, basement, attic, garage, and closet. They can also be found in your backyard, in the park, or on the playground.

Activity: Poison Proofing Home Assignment

It's really important for your class to take the poison prevention message home. Children can be taught to be more aware of poisons and to always check with an adult before eating, touching, drinking or smelling an unknown substance. At the same time, it is ultimately the responsibility of adults to keep children safe from potential poisoning. This can only happen if parents and caregivers also take the time to learn about poisons and poison safety.

Please send home the letter from the Missouri Regional Poison Center explaining what the children have learned about poison prevention. Include the checklist letter that can be returned to you. This letter encourages families to inspect their homes for possible poisons and to take action to make their homes safe.

Dear Parent,

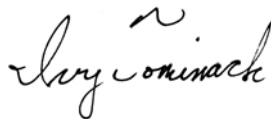
Poisonings can be prevented - especially among children. Your child has taken part in a poison prevention program developed by the Missouri Regional Center. Please ask your child to tell you what they have learned about poison and talk about what poison is and what it looks like.

Teach your child not to eat or drink anything they're not sure about without first checking with an adult. Remind them that poison doesn't have to look or smell bad – sometimes it can be a pretty color and smell and look good to eat. Talk about the idea that poison can be a liquid, solid, spray or invisible gas. We hope that your child is now more aware about the importance of staying away from poisons. You can help your child to stay safe by taking the time to learn about poisons and poison safety.

Your child has brought home some poison safety information to share with you. Please read over this important information and talk about it with him or her. Make sure you place the Missouri Regional Poison Center's emergency number - **1-800-222-1222** - on or near your telephone(s). The Poison Center operates a 24-hour poison emergency telephone service providing poisoning treatment and prevention information to all residents of Missouri. Call the Poison Center in a poison emergency or if you have a question about the safety of any product, medicine or plant. Call even if you just suspect that someone has been poisoned – don't take the risk of waiting to see if symptoms develop before you call. All calls to the Poison Center are free of charge and confidential.

To prevent poisonings from happening, make sure that your home and any home your child visits is poison proofed. Your child has been given a "Home Safety Check List" which will help you to poison proof your home. Please help your child to fill it out and return it to the teacher.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ivy Tominack". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Ivy Tominack
Public Education Coordinator
Missouri Regional Poison Center

Dear _____,
(Name of teacher)

My child brought this checklist home to our family, and together we went through our home and checked all the places where potential poisons might be found. We talked about locking up poisonous products. We're going to try to protect our family and children who visit us so that they will be safe from poisoning.

Here are the places we looked to see if potentially poisonous products were stored safely:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> kitchen | <input type="checkbox"/> bathrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> bedrooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> garage | <input type="checkbox"/> closets | <input type="checkbox"/> laundry room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dining room | <input type="checkbox"/> workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> storage places |
| <input type="checkbox"/> basement | <input type="checkbox"/> attic | <input type="checkbox"/> yard |

Our family looked especially for these things:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> medicines, including aspirin, acetaminophen, and vitamins | <input type="checkbox"/> paint remover, turpentine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> house plants | <input type="checkbox"/> cosmetics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disinfectants, deodorants, air fresheners | <input type="checkbox"/> soaps, detergents, shampoo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> all kinds of sprays | <input type="checkbox"/> toilet bowl and drain cleaners |
| <input type="checkbox"/> polishes, cleaning powders | <input type="checkbox"/> lye, bleaches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moth balls, pesticides | <input type="checkbox"/> kerosene, lighter fluids |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> insect repellent |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> ant and rat poison, slug bait |

Here are the names of some poisonous products we found in our home that are not listed:

We made sure that the number for the Missouri Regional Poison Center is near our telephone(s).

Sincerely,

(name of child)

(name of parent)



Activity: Creating a Poster for the Missouri Regional Poison Center's Poison Prevention Week Poster Contest

After delivering a poison prevention lesson, have the students create a poster for this year's contest.

Rules and Guidelines:

1. POSTERS must be at least 8½" by 11" in size.
2. ALL POSTERS from each school should be sent together. Posters may be mailed or hand delivered to:

**Missouri Regional Poison Center
7980 Clayton Road, Suite 200
St. Louis, MO 63117
Attn: Poster Contest**

Notice: The Poison Center is not located in the hospital complex at this time. Please note the address above.

3. **Posters must be received by Monday, March 12, 2007**
4. Posters will be judged on Creativity, Originality, and Neatness
5. There is not a specific theme other than poison prevention.
6. All posters will become the property of the Missouri Regional Poison Center and will not be returned.
7. **One poster from each grade will be selected as a winner.** One poster will be selected as the overall grand prizewinner. The winning posters and several others will be displayed during Poison Prevention Week at the St. Louis Science Center. **Each winner will receive an ice-cream party for his or her class. The Grand Prizewinner will receive a Family Membership to the Magic House St. Louis Children's Museum in Kirkwood, a Family Membership to the St. Louis Science Center, a Mr. Yuk shirt from the Poison Center, and a pizza party at school for his/her class.**
8. Contest is open to all students in **kindergarten through third grade.**
9. Student's NAME, AGE, TEACHER, GRADE, SCHOOL, SCHOOL ADDRESS and PHONE NUMBER must be printed **legibly** on the back of each poster.