



Accidental poisonings

The largest number of childhood accidents happen in the home.

Our homes and gardens are full of harmless-looking products that we use everyday which can be dangerous if your child accidentally swallows them or breathes them in, or if they come into contact with your child's skin or eyes.

- The NHS lists what we mean by poisons:
 - taking medicine that is not for you or taking too much of that medicine
 - household items such as bleach or cleaning products
 - cosmetics such as nail polish
 - some types of plants and fungi
 - carbon monoxide
 - food that might not have been cooked properly or has gone mouldy
 - alcohol
 - recreational drugs or substances
 - medicines prescribed for pets
- Small children are curious and learn by putting things in their mouth. Children also love to copy, and they will be fascinated by interesting bottles they see parents opening, or brightly coloured washing tablets popped in with a wash.
- They are not old enough to understand the risks and their curiosity will push them to explore new things. There's a risk that cleaning products and medicines, that are not stored and used safely, increase the risk of accidental poisoning.

[More information on Page 2](#)

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 01/06/2022 as part of suite of Parent Tips on safety in the home with support from the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) who we thank for the use of their resources.

Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the content of our resources is accurate and peer-reviewed at time of publication, evidence and advice may change over time. Therefore, please always exercise your own judgement. The iHV does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information and cannot accept liability for use of our resources. Should you doubt the accuracy of any of our content, please contact us: info@ihv.org.uk

Accidental poisonings

Top tips to stop poisoning

In this section, we are sharing resources made by the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) about preventing poisoning. These tips are simple and, by reading them and thinking about how to make your home safer, hopefully your child will be at less risk of accidental poisoning.



Cleaning and laundry products

The bright colours of cleaning products by the toilet or the squidgy washing tablets under the kitchen sink can be really appealing to small children. However, the concentrated chemicals can do serious damage to children's insides, skin and eyes.

- Take a moment to check where your products are and move them to a safe spot in a high up or lockable cupboard, out of sight and reach.
- Watch out for fast little fingers! Don't leave a washing tablet on top of the washing.
- Put products away out of reach as soon as you've used them.
- Don't rely on safety caps – they slow children down, but they're not childproof.
- Look out for products with a bittering agent like Bitrex when you shop. It tastes so horrible that children spit it out instead of swallowing - preventing accidental poisoning.
- Keep medicines/ cleaning products/ chemicals away from food.
- Keep all products in their original containers as this helps identify the risk and avoids any confusion with containers for non-harmful products.



Button batteries and super strong magnets

- Button batteries are found in many items in homes such as TV remote controls, toys, fitness trackers, hearing aids or musical cards.
- Button batteries should be kept out of reach (including supposedly "dead" batteries which are still dangerous).
- Only use button batteries in products with screw down battery compartments.
- Be really careful of any products ordered online or obtained secondhand.

Paracetamol and other everyday painkillers

Accidentally swallowing everyday painkillers is the most common way for young children to be poisoned. They can easily mistake the shiny blister packs and colourful tablets for something interesting to eat.

- Have a look around your home for any medicines and move them to a safe spot in a high up or lockable cupboard, out of sight and reach.
- Watch out for painkillers left on a bedside table, in handbags, washbags, or on the floor too.
- Avoid talking about medicine as sweets to children.
- Return old medicines or out of date medicines to the Pharmacist.
- Avoid giving medicines to a child in the dark as it is easy to make a mistake in the dosage.



Keeping your home safe

- Be vigilant - Look around your home and spot your hazards – keep these locked away or out of reach. For example: alcohol; button batteries; cleaning products such as bleach; dishwasher tablets; e-cigarettes/ cigarettes; fungi and plants; garden chemicals; hair products like shampoo; liquid laundry capsules; paint/ paint thinner/ methylated spirit; medicines; nicotine; pet medicines; recreational drugs or substances; tobacco; unprepared or raw food.
- Fit a carbon monoxide alarm in rooms where you have flame-burning appliances and have them and your boiler checked regularly by a Gas Safe-registered engineer.
- Fit cupboard locks to cupboards where you store potential poisonous substances.
- Close all chemical/ cleaning products/ medicine lids after use and store safely immediately.
- Remind other members of the family or friends to be careful with their medicines if they come to stay and not left in an open and accessible position or bag.
- Check your garden for common garden chemicals like slug pellets, dog/cat/animal poo.
- Keep cigarettes/ e-cigarettes/ tobacco out of children's reach and try to avoid smoking in front of your child.

[More information on Page 3](#)

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 01/06/2022 as part of suite of Parent Tips on safety in the home with support from the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) who we thank for the use of their resources.

Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the content of our resources is accurate and peer-reviewed at time of publication, evidence and advice may change over time. Therefore, please always exercise your own judgement. The iHV does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information and cannot accept liability for use of our resources.

Should you doubt the accuracy of any of our content, please contact us: info@ihv.org.uk

Accidental poisonings

Our homes and gardens

- Accidents are one of the biggest killers of children and young people, and non-fatal injuries can also change some children's lives forever. But accidents don't have to happen - the majority of these serious accidents are completely preventable.
- Some garden plants, such as bright red yew berries, laburnum pods and foxgloves, are especially attractive to small children, but they are also very poisonous. Always read the label carefully if you're buying new plants. If you're unsure about the existing plants in your garden, visit a flower shop or garden centre for more advice. The Royal Horticultural Society has a helpful page listing harmful and poisonous plants. Please visit: <https://bit.ly/3cTM30I>



What to do if you think your child has swallowed something, or you're not sure?

- Be aware of sudden, unexplained illness in young children, particularly if they're drowsy or unconscious, because poisoning could be the cause (see possible symptoms).
- Call 999 if the symptoms are life threatening. For more information on what to do when your worried about poisoning and accidental swallowing, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3a6KgJi>
- Medical advice should be sought immediately if you think your child has swallowed a poisonous substance.
- If you think your child has swallowed pills - spend a minute or two looking for the missing pills, but only if your child is not needing immediate medical advice.
- If you still think your child has swallowed something, and they do not have life threatening symptoms, contact your GP or 111 for advice.
- Take the remaining pills, empty packet or container with you so that the doctors can check the labelling and calculate how much your child may have taken.
- Don't give your child salt and water, or do anything else to make them sick.

The NHS lists the following general symptoms of poisoning:

- feeling and being sick
- diarrhoea
- stomach pain
- drowsiness, dizziness or weakness
- high temperature
- chills (shivering)
- loss of appetite
- headache
- irritability
- difficulty swallowing (dysphagia)
- breathing difficulties
- producing more saliva than normal
- skin rash
- blue lips and skin (cyanosis)
- burns around the nose or mouth
- double vision or blurred vision
- mental confusion
- seizures (fits)
- loss of consciousness in severe cases

Further information

- **Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT)** - subscribe for free regular updates here: <https://bit.ly/3xk00SK>
CAPT has lots of helpful information:
 - » Child Safety Week Fact sheets: <https://bit.ly/3z4TekG>
 - » Button battery safety: <https://bit.ly/3IJCOqf>
 - » Safety alerts on super strong magnets: <https://bit.ly/39WFPAY>

- **Healthier Together** - has more information on what to do if your child is unwell: <https://bit.ly/3cdGmKr>
- **St John's Ambulance** - You may want to take a first aid course which are run in most areas. Organisations such as St John's Ambulance run helpful courses: <https://bit.ly/3e2PnH3>
- **NHS** - poisonings: <https://bit.ly/3xdZUfq>

For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 01/06/2022 as part of suite of Parent Tips on safety in the home with support from the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) who we thank for the use of their resources.

Whilst we have taken every care to ensure the content of our resources is accurate and peer-reviewed at time of publication, evidence and advice may change over time. Therefore, please always exercise your own judgement. The iHV does not warrant or guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information and cannot accept liability for use of our resources. Should you doubt the accuracy of any of our content, please contact us: info@ihv.org.uk