Make Your Childcare Poison Safe Care

Goal
Childcare providers will keep their children poison safe.

Objectives
Upon completion of this lesson, participants will be able to:
1. Define what a poison is.
2. Identify four poisonous products in their childcare facility.
3. Identify three ways to keep poisonous products safely away from children.
4. Explain the role of the Poison Control Center.
5. Call the Poison Control Center if they need information on poisonings or suspect a poisoning.
6. Post the Poison Control Center telephone number by all the phones in their childcare facility and in their cell phone.
7. Share with parents information about poison safety for children in the home.

Key Points
1. Childcare providers must protect the children they care for from exposure to poisonous products in their childcare center.
2. The most common poisons are medications, cleaning and chemical products, plants and cosmetics.
3. The Poison Control Center is a free community resource for Tennesseans.
4. The Poison Control Center is manned by specialists 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
5. One in every three poison exposures reported in children is due to similarities between common foods and medications.
6. Poisonings are a major cause of death of children under 6 years of age.
7. With the types of cleaning supplies, baby supplies, medications and other chemical products in a childcare facility, the chances of unintentional poisoning can increase significantly for small children.

Time Required
This lesson is designed to be 30 minutes in length; however, depending on the teaching style, the number of participants and their interest in the topic, additional time may be required.

Materials
- Obtain enough copies of the poster and exhibits for each childcare provider to display in their center.
- Obtain enough copies of the following reproducible masters:
- American Association of Poison Control Center’s publication, Poisoning Fact Sheet for Parents/Childcare Providers
- UT publications: Parenting Tips for Poison Prevention (SP608, SP608-A)
- Keep Your Children Poison Safe
- Stop Childhood Poisonings
- Feedback Questionnaire

- Obtain enough of the following:
  - Poison Control Center phone number labels available from the Tennessee Poison Center.
- Find out the March dates for Poison Prevention Week to share with the childcare providers by checking this web site [www.poisonprevention.org](http://www.poisonprevention.org). It is usually the third full week in March.
- Gather the following look-a-likes. Display them to show the childcare providers different types of poisons.
  - Jug of milk (yellow with red top) and bleach (yellow with red top)
  - Yellow sports drink and yellow household cleaner
  - Parmesan cheese and granular cleaner
  - Soft drink can and can of oil
  - Honey and car product that looks like honey
  - Orange sports drink and same type of bottle with orange cleaner inside (unlabeled)
  - Toothpaste and muscle relaxant cream (similar containers)
  - Medicine and candy look-a-likes, such as:
    - Tylenol and Tic-Tac
    - Motrin and Skittles
    - Multivitamin and Good & Fruity
    - Ibuprofen and Good n’ Plenty
  - Mouthwash
  - Spray bottle of glass cleaner (one type of cleaner should have a berry or lemon on the bottle and labeled with the name of a food, such as “lemon” or “orange”)

**Trainer Preparation**

Prior to the lesson, read the lesson plan and handouts to become thoroughly familiar with the content and activities in the lesson.

**Content**

1. **Say:** As a childcare provider, you have many responsibilities. Keeping the children you care for safe is an important part of your job. A major threat to children, especially under six years of age, is poisoning. The most effective way to prevent poisonings is through prevention. Today we are going to talk about how to keep your childcare setting poison safe for your children. Poisonings are common and can happen to any of us. Poisonings is a common unintentional injury for children 6 years of age or
young. At least a million times a year, children are accidentally poisoned in the United States. Poisonings are the major cause of death among young children. Although most of these accidental poisonings occur in the home, poisoning can still take place in your childcare setting.

Children ages 1-3 are at highest risk for poisonings. Children at these ages like to put things in their mouths and taste things. This is a natural way for children to learn about the world around them. Also, they are at eye level to cabinets that are often the storage places for household and chemical products.

More than 90 percent of these accidental poisonings occur in the home. Children act fast. Many accidents happen when adults are using a product, preparing a meal, administering medication or answering the phone or door. The caregiver looks away or walks away from the child for just a few moments and the child has picked up a wash cloth soaked in ammonia, or inhaled the talcum powder lying on the changing table, or the child might pick up and drink from a container of disinfectant or cough medicine left on the counter.

2. **Ask:** What is a poison? Group responses should include the following: A poison is anything some eats (ingests), breathes (inhales), gets in the eyes, or on the skin, that can cause sickness or death if it gets into or on the body. Poison can be found in four forms: solid, liquid, spray or gas.

   **Do:** Write the responses on newsprint and post on the wall.

3. **Ask:** What is the most common cause of unintentional poisonings among children?

   **Say:** The answer is mistaking poison as food among children under six years of age. Consider some of the similarities: orange candy and pain relievers, breath mints and pain relievers, allergy medicine and candy, fruit drinks and mouthwash, chewing tobacco and bubble gum, disinfectant and apple juice, gum laxatives and chewing gum, cough drops and candy, rubbing alcohol and water, vitamin/mineral supplements and candy, and rat poison and cereal.

   Poisons often come in pretty colors and attractive containers. Children can mistake a poison for something good to eat or drink. To the average two year old, that plastic jug of drain cleaner under your sink looks exactly like that cold jug of milk you pull out of the refrigerator. Children also copy adults doing things such as taking medications, chewing tobacco, drinking an alcoholic beverage or cleaning with household products.

4. **Ask:** What are some dangerous poisons? Responses can include:

   - Alcoholic beverages
   - Antifreeze
   - Aspirin
   - Bleach
   - Cigarette butts
   - Cooking oil
   - Disinfectant
   - Drain cleaner
   - Eucalyptus oil
   - Gasoline
   - Hair spray
   - Laxative
   - Paint
   - Poisonous plants
   - Poisonous sprays
   - Sulfuric acid
   - Talcum powder
   - Toilet bowl cleaner
   - Vomit control spray
   - Whirlpool cleaning solution
   - Windsurfing fluid
   - Washing machine detergent
   - Windex
   - Xylenes
   - Yeast
   - Wrinkle cream
   - Zep

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- **Medicines** including over-the-counter medicines, prescription medicines, vitamin and mineral supplements, including iron supplements and herbal supplements
- **Household Products** such as drain opener, toilet bowl cleaner, over cleaners, rust remover, furniture polish, lighter fluid, lamp oil, turpentine, paint thinner
- **Car and Equipment Products** such as antifreeze, windshield solutions, gasoline, kerosene
- **Pesticides**
- **Personal Care Products** such as mouthwash, cosmetics, nail polish, hair removal products, rubbing alcohol
- **Plants** such as wild mushrooms, Dieffenbachia, pokeweed, philodendron, foxglove, holly berries, castor bean
- **Environmental poisons** such as carbon monoxide and lead containing paint

**Do:** Record responses on newsprint.

5. **Do:** Refer to the look-a-likes.

**Ask:** What are the things about these items that can trick children?

**Response:** Color of container (milk jug), color of liquid (honey and sports drink), picture of food on the container (cleaning products), and looks like candy.

6. **Ask:** What are two critical things you can do to keep your children safe from poisons in your childcare setting? Responses should include the following:

   - **Store** poisonous products safely
   - **Use** poisonous products safely

7. **Say:** Storing poisonous products safely includes:

   - Lock poisonous products and medicines out of the reach and sight of children by using safety latches.
   - Store poisonous products in their original labeled containers. Do not use food containers such as cups and bottles to store these items. Store food and household/chemical products in separate areas.
   - Keep medicines, vitamins/mineral supplements, herbal supplements and household products in containers with child resistant caps.
8. **Say:** Using products safely includes:
   - Before using a product, carefully read the label on the container and use as directed.
   - While using a poisonous product, never leave it unattended. A child may find it.
   - Never leave children alone with household products, baby cleaning supplies or medications. If you are using a product, take the child with you when stopping to answer the telephone or door. Most poisonings occur when the product is in use.
   - After using a poisonous product, put it back in a locked cabinet. Make sure the container is closed tightly.
   - Be aware that no container is “child-proof” - child-resistant containers can slow children down but may not prevent them from opening the container.
   - Never call medicine “candy.” Children may eat medicine thinking it is candy. Be as careful with non-prescription medicines as you are with prescription medications.
   - Do not take or give medicine in front of children, or while another child is watching.
   - In your childcare center, install carbon monoxide detectors if you have appliances fueled with gas, oil, kerosene or wood. A carbon monoxide detector sounds an alarm before dangerous levels of carbon monoxide accumulates.
   - If your facility was built before 1978, have it tested for lead-based paint to protect your children from lead exposure. Wash children’s hands and faces, as well as toys and pacifiers, frequently to reduce the risk of ingesting lead contaminated dust.
   - Store potentially harmful products and medications out of sight, out of reach and best of all, locked up.
   - Be prepared. Keep the phone number of the Poison Control Center by your phones, in your phone book and your cell phone. The number is **1-800-222-1222**. Your Poison Control Center is in Nashville at the Vanderbilt Medical Center. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is manned by specialists trained in poison detection and treatment. This is a free community resource to you.

9. **Ask:** What should you do if a poisoning occurs or you even suspect a potential poisoning?

   **Say:** You should do the following:
   - Don’t hesitate to call the Poison Control Center. Remember: Children act fast and so do poisons.
• Don’t panic. Not all substances are poisonous, and not all exposures cause poisonings.
• Call the Tennessee Poison Center immediately for help.
• Do not treat the poison until the Poison Control Center staff determines what to do unless the container offers immediate treatment recommendations such as rinsing skin with water or flushing eyes with water.
• Have the following information ready:
  o Child’s condition, age and weight
  o Product container
  o Whether the product has been swallowed, inhaled or splashed into the eyes
  o Time that the poisoning occurred
  o Any first aid you have done
  o Your name and telephone number
  o Where you are and how far you are from the hospital

  The Poison Control Center staff will determine if anything needs to be done and walk you through how to treat the victim. You should also notify the child’s parents.

Closing
A. Say: Unintentional poisonings are preventable. Poison-proofing your childcare facility can save a life.

B. Say: Share this information with your friends and other childcare providers. Many people do not know that there is a Poison Control Center in Tennessee. As a result they call 911 or take the person to the emergency room. Valuable time is lost in treating the poisoning. Ironically, 911 and the emergency room often call the Poison Control Center for recommendations on how to treat the poisonings. So always call the Tennessee Poison Center if you have a question about a poisoning or suspect a poisoning.

Do: Distribute the UT publication Parenting Tips for Poison Prevention, posters and exhibits.

C. Say: Take the time to share with the parents of the children you care for about how to poison-proof their home by displaying the posters, publications and exhibits during Poison Prevention Week, which is celebrated in March every year. As an activity have children design posters warning children and parents about poisons.