

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

March 16, 2012

Poison Prevention Week aims to prevent childhood poisonings

VANCOUVER, BC – On average, every hour of every day at least one child in BC is poisoned. That's why "Children Act Fast...So Do Poisons" is the theme of this year's Poison Prevention Week, March 18 – 24.

"Over half of all poisonings occur in children younger than six years of age and many of these poisonings can be managed at home with the advice of the Poison Control Centre," says Debra Kent, Clinical Supervisor for the BC Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC). "We want to remind parents, caregivers and friends...Don't Guess. Be sure. Phone the Poison Control Centre."

The most common "poisons" affecting children are pain and fever medicine, plants and cleaners. Many poisonings in children occur just before lunch or dinner when children are hungry and often least supervised. In some cases parents assume that children can't open "child-proof" caps when, in fact, caps on pill bottles are actually "child-resistant" and children can open them with enough time.

"Many poisonings can be prevented by properly following directions on product labels, ensuring hazardous substances are put away safely and keeping medicines and cleaners out of reach of young children," says Provincial Health Officer Dr. Perry Kendall. "Caregivers need to be aware that if there is a poisoning, they should call the Poison Control Centre, a key component of BC's public health system."

In BC, poisoning ranks third among the top 10 causes of death from injury, which also include suicide, motor-vehicle crashes, homicide, falls, drowning, and fires. It has been estimated that unintentional poisonings cost British Columbians \$216 million annually in both direct and indirect costs.

"Poison Awareness and First Aid" pamphlets are now available in Chinese, English, French, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Other materials available to promote awareness include a "Plant Awareness" pamphlet, a series of informative posters, and phone stickers and magnets with numbers for the Poison Control Centre's hotline. Materials are free of charge for BC residents and can be obtained from www.dpic.org, by e-mailing info@dpic.ca, or by calling 604-707-2789, extension 3.

The Poison Control Centre at DPIC is a program of the BC Centre for Disease Control, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The Centre offers British Columbians a 24-hour telephone support and advice line, which is staffed by pharmacists and nurses who provide expert treatment advice on chemical or drug poisonings and overdoses. If a child swallows or handles a potentially dangerous product, immediately call the Poison Control Centre hotline at 604-682-5050 or 1-800-567-8911.

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