



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes Poison Prevention Week *State Health Department Urges North Dakotans To Watch for Dangers When Spring Cleaning*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Poison Prevention Week March 20 through 26, 2011, the North Dakota Department of Health is encouraging North Dakotans to take measures to avoid unintentional poisonings while spring cleaning, according to Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director for the North Dakota Department of Health.

In 2010, there were nearly 6,000 exposure calls made to the Poison Helpline. According to Read, Poison Prevention Week is an opportunity to remind families about the dangers of poisoning and to focus on preventing exposure to poisons, especially as spring approaches and people spend more time in their yards.

“One thing that people don’t always think about is poisons in their garage,” Read said. “Vehicles left running in a closed garage can quickly result in symptoms of toxicity for people in both the garage and the house. Anytime a motorized vehicle – including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles or snowmobiles – are running, the garage door needs to be open and there needs to be adequate ventilation.”

Other fuel-burning equipment including generators, lawnmowers, leaf blowers and portable heaters also produce some carbon monoxide during operation that could result in toxicity when used in a poorly ventilated space.

Many of the exposure calls each year are related to fluids that have been transferred from their original container and improperly labeled. Substances like antifreeze and windshield washer fluid can be toxic with as little as one mouthful. Not only do these products smell sweet and taste enticing to children, but they also are frequently accidentally ingested by adults who have poured them into water or pop bottles for ease of use. Harmful liquids should never be stored in any bottle other than the original container and should be kept on a high shelf in the garage.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

With spring yard work becoming a priority, the garage also becomes a place to store chemicals like fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. While all of these can be harmful, pesticides pose the biggest risk if ingested or if used without personal protective equipment. Users should read the product labels prior to use to find out if gloves, masks or coveralls are required. People should also shower and change their clothes as soon as possible after applying pesticides to their yard, as some are absorbed through the skin. Most manufacturers also give directions as to the length of time people and pets should remain off a freshly-treated lawn to prevent exposure to the chemicals.

“By using common sense, most poisonings can be prevented,” Read said. “It’s very important to protect children from substances that can harm them. All adults should take preventive measures to avoid unnecessary exposure to toxins.”

The Department of Health recommends the following poison-prevention measures:

- Store strong chemicals away from food and never store poison in food or beverage containers.
- Read all labels before using a product and follow the instructions carefully while measuring.
- Keep windows and/or doors open or run fans when using strong cleaning products.
- Never mix cleaning products together as a dangerous gas may occur.
- Never sniff containers to see what’s inside.
- Discard old or outdated products as the first aid advice on the containers may be incorrect or outdated.
- Have the national poison control phone number available, along with other emergency contacts. Telephone stickers and magnets with the helpline phone number are available from the North Dakota Department of Health.

In case of a poisoning or a questionable episode, people should do the following:

- If the situation is an emergency, call 9-1-1.
- Do not give the person anything to eat or drink. Call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222 immediately.
- Bring the product or bottle to the phone so you can read the label to staff at the Poison Control Center. Explain what was taken, how much was taken, when it was taken, and the age and weight of the person.
- Do not give syrup of ipecac or activated charcoal unless told to do so by the Poison Control Center or your physician.

For more information about poison prevention or to request stickers and magnets with the national poison control number, contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2286 (press 1) or visit our website at www.ndpoison.org.

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