



## **Poisoning and child safety**

**What is poisonous to children? What should you do if your child has tasted something or got something in their eye? An overview is presented below of the potential poisoning hazards that children may encounter either around the home or in their surroundings.**



Children can easily come across medicines stored in toiletry bags, handbags and bedside drawers. This can increase the risk of poisoning. Photo: Norwegian Poison Information Centre.

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There are products in every home which are toxic or hazardous to health. Accidents involving such products can lead to poisoning, which in the worst case scenario can even be life-threatening. The Norwegian Poison Information Centre has found that children aged 1-4 years are particularly susceptible to poisoning accidents.

## **First aid in the event of spillage - on the skin or eyes or upon swallowing**

### **Skin**

In the event of the spillage of chemicals or other products, rinse the skin under running water at a comfortable temperature. If there is any suspicion that the product may be corrosive, call the Norwegian Poison Information Centre (22 59 13 00) while continuing to rinse the affected area. It is important to get started quickly.

### **Eyes**

The eyes are more sensitive than the skin, and it is often painful to get something in your eye. Rinse under running lukewarm water or with sterile saline solution as soon as possible. This can be difficult, but it can also be very important.

#### **Tips for rinsing your child's eyes:**

- Try to calm the situation down and make the child feel as safe and secure as possible.
- Apply water directly onto the eye. It may be necessary to hold the eyelids apart in order to achieve this.
- If it is difficult to rinse the eye under a tap, use a clean drinking bottle or jug to pour running water onto the eye.
- If necessary, use the shower or bath.
- Consider whether it would be better for your child to sit or lie down, either on the floor or on your lap.
- Contaminated hands should also be rinsed to prevent the product from being rubbed into the eyes again.

The Norwegian Poison Information Centre (22 59 13 00) can provide advice on how long you should continue rinsing for and whether you should contact a doctor. In the case of the spillage of products which are irritants, such as liquid hand soap, shampoos and moisturizers, the situation can be monitored at home after rinsing. Take the child to see a doctor if the symptoms last for longer than a couple of hours after the accident.

Corrosive products can cause serious eye damage. Rinse the eye continuously until a doctor takes over the treatment.



## Children tasting products

Children often like to taste things around them as they explore the world. Remove residues from the child's mouth and offer them a drink. Older children can first rinse their mouth out and spit. This is difficult in the case of young children, but getting them to drink something also causes a rinsing effect in the mouth. Offer the child some water or something else that your child likes, such as fruit juice or milk, or breastfeed the baby. A few sips or a glass of something is often sufficient. Vomiting should not normally be induced at home.

If your child has swallowed a corrosive substance, rinse their mouth out and offer them a glass of something to drink. Call 113. Corrosive substances can also cause inflammation of the respiratory tract and breathing problems.

## Activated charcoal

Activated charcoal is specially treated charcoal which can be beneficial to give the child following a poisoning accident. In many situations, it is neither necessary nor desirable to give activated charcoal. Charcoal should not be given to children who are reluctant, lethargic or vomiting because of risk of aspiration.

If you have children, activated charcoal can be useful to have as part of a first aid kit at home. In cases where charcoal may be appropriate, it is important that it is given quickly after the accident. Contact the Norwegian Poison Information Centre (22 59 13 00) for an assessment before giving activated charcoal to anyone.

## Medicines

In the case of some medicines, even a single tablet can be enough to cause severe poisoning in a child. Other medicines are not as dangerous. Tasting fluoride tablets, oral contraceptives or multivitamins which do not contain iron rarely gives rise to any symptoms.

### **Over-the-counter medicines can also cause poisoning:**

- Keep all medicines out of reach of children.
- In the case of liquid medicines, you should use the appropriate dosing equipment, such as a syringe, measuring cup or measuring spoon.
- To avoid confusing medicines, always read the packaging and label carefully.
- Use the medicine as explained by your doctor or pharmacist. Read the instructions for use carefully so that you know the correct amount to take.
- Take particular care when you are visiting someone or have guests staying. Children can find medicines which are not being stored properly, e.g. in a handbag that has been left on the floor.
- Pay particular attention to the correct use and storage of medicines when travelling.



# Chemical products

Every home has a store of chemical products for the house, car or garden. Proper storage of such products is important for the prevention of poisoning accidents.

Drain cleaners and oven cleaners are examples of products which can give rise to serious corrosive injuries if swallowed or splashed in the eyes or onto the skin.

Petroleum products such as lighter fluid, lamp oil and petrol can cause severe lung reactions, even when swallowed in small amounts.

- Store chemical products securely and keep them out of your child's reach.
- Always use the original packaging. Never pour products into fruit juice bottles, soft drinks bottles or water bottles.
- Do not rely on child-proof closing mechanisms. Experience suggests that some children are able to open these mechanisms.
- Always supervise products during use when children are nearby.
- Hazard labelling on packaging can be confusing and products without any hazard symbols can also entail a poisoning risk.

# Plants

We surround ourselves with plants around the home and in the garden. Most plants are not dangerous to taste, but some plants can cause poisoning.

Familiarise yourself with the plants that you have at home and in your local community. Houseplants will often have their name written on a label. Wild plants and garden plants can be harder to identify. Ask someone who knows a lot about plants, such as a gardener or a member of staff at a garden centre. Check the name of the plant against photographs from quality-assured sources, in books or on the internet. Note that the appearance of plants can change during the growing season. The Norwegian Poison Information Centre has photographs of many plants at [giftinfo.no](http://giftinfo.no).

Plant recognition apps can sometimes be useful. However, it is important to know that all apps have their limitations, and the information from these apps should be cross-checked against other sources and used with caution.

The Norwegian Poison Information Centre does not identify plants. In the event of an accident, the Poison Information Centre will be able to help you with an assessment of the situation based on the available information. This could for example include ruling out the most dangerous plants or berries.



# Mushrooms

Some mushrooms are so toxic that even tasting one can be dangerous. If your child has tasted an unknown mushroom, you should always contact the Poison Information Centre. They can help you to identify the mushroom and advise you what to do next. Retain the part-eaten mushroom or what is left of it. Have the mushroom or good photographs of it to hand when you call.

## Useful information:

- where the mushroom is growing (forest, lawn, wood or other)
- whether it is a mushroom with a cap and a stem, and what type of "pattern" there is under the cap (gills, pores, teeth, etc.)
- how much you think has been swallowed

It is not dangerous to touch mushrooms. For poisoning to occur, some of the mushroom must be swallowed. In the case of the most dangerous mushrooms, even a small bite can cause poisoning.

## When taking photographs of the mushroom:

- hold it in the palm of your hand
- take in-focus close-ups
- take photographs from different angles
  - at least one from above (the top of the mushroom)
  - at least one from below with the stalk
  - if appropriate, from the growth area

# Snuff and other nicotine products

Nicotine products such as snuff, nicotine chewing gum and e-cigarette liquids are poisonous to children.

This type of product is often readily accessible and accidents can happen all too quickly. Always keep snuff and other nicotine products out of reach of children.

If a child tastes an e-cigarette liquid which contains nicotine, call 113.

If your child has tasted snuff, nicotine chewing gum, tobacco or cigarettes, the amount of nicotine in the product will determine whether your child can simply be observed at home or whether you should take them to see a doctor. Find out more at [giftinfo.no](http://giftinfo.no) or call the Poison Information Centre (22 59 13 00) for advice.



## Baby products

Most accidents involving ordinary baby products are not dangerous. Nevertheless, you must monitor your child in case they develop symptoms.

You must pay particular attention if the child gets something in their mouth when lying on their back. In such situations, products can more easily end up down the respiratory tract and give rise to symptoms which require medical attention from a doctor. Baby powders (talc) and baby oil are examples of such products.

## The Norwegian Poison Information Centre – who are we?

The Norwegian Poison Information Centre is a national, 24-hour advisory service which is available to private individuals, health professionals and others. We assess the risk of acute poisoning in different situations and provide advice on what to do.

The Norwegian Poison Information Centre is a department under the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, which consists of junior and senior advisers with relevant education and training.

When you call the Norwegian Poison Information Centre, we will base the advice we give you on the information you provide us with. What has happened, when the accident happened, the age of the child and whether there are any symptoms is all important information that we need to know in order to assess the risk of acute poisoning. You will be given advice on what to do next, and whether you can monitor your child at home or whether you should see a doctor.

The Norwegian Poison Information Centre's website can be found at Helsenorge ([giftinfo.no](https://giftinfo.no)). The website contains more information on everything from plants, mushrooms, chemicals and products to medicines and first aid advice. On the website, you will also find our poster and brochures, which can be downloaded.

**Norwegian Poison Information Centre**

**22 59 13 00**

(24-hour)

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