



BACKGROUND

Poison Prevention Week – March 21 to 27, 2021

Poison Prevention Week is an annual national awareness campaign, running March 21 to 27 in 2021, to draw attention to the causes of poisoning and how to prevent them from occurring. Each year, more than 4,000 Canadians lose their lives and more than 20,000 are hospitalized due to poisoning.

Parachute and Poison Prevention Week

Annual unintentional poisoning deaths have now surpassed transport-related deaths in Canada. With many potential poisons, such as household cleaners, medications and cannabis products, in Canadian homes and families spending more time there, it is important to know how to safely store these items. In 2021, Parachute is joining forces with our partners across the country to show all Canadians they have the power to **#CheckForPoisons** and prevent unintentional poisoning at home.

The facts on unintentional poisoning

Children are particularly vulnerable to poisoning because of their small body size and lower weight. You may be aware that medications, cleaners, vitamins, personal care products, car supplies, pesticides, and some plants can be poisonous to children; however, several new poison issues have emerged in recent years that parents and caregivers should know about. These include:

Cannabis

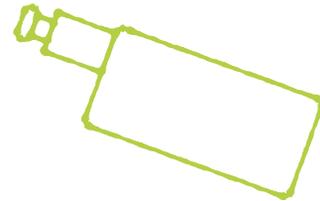
- Cannabis edibles often resemble common snacks (e.g., cookies, brownies, gummy candies). A young child may be unable to tell the difference and unknowingly consume a large amount.
- Cannabis edibles can have a stronger, more prolonged effect on the body than other forms of cannabis. Ingesting cannabis is the most common cause of cannabis poisoning in children.



- 94 per cent of Canadian parents who use cannabis agree it is their responsibility to safely store their cannabis products; yet, only 41 per cent strongly agree that they are aware of guidelines on how to store cannabis safely.

E-Cigarettes

- Liquid nicotine refills for e-cigarettes are sold in flavours that may be appealing to children. Nicotine can be harmful to a child if they put it in their mouth, swallow it or spill it on their skin.
- Exposures related to e-cigarettes have been on the rise since 2012, with children younger than five years old accounting for 44 per cent. More than half of these cases have resulted from unintentional ingestion of e-cigarette liquid.



Hand sanitizers and bleach

- While these products are not new to Canadian homes, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased focus on handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting.
- The number of calls to poison centres regarding hand sanitizers, bleaches and disinfectants grew significantly in 2020, compared to 2019.



Laundry detergent pods

- Colourful, transparent laundry detergent pods may look like candies or toys to children.
- Laundry detergent pods can harm a child if ingested, or if the liquid squirts into their eyes.



How to prevent unintentional poisoning

- Keep all potential poisons **locked up high, out of sight and out of reach** of children.
- Keep products in their **original, child-resistant packaging**. Child-resistant packaging has been shown to reduce poisoning injuries and fatalities.
- Keep medications, cleaners and other products in their **original, labelled packaging** to ensure you have instructions for use, avoid mix-ups, and have information about the contents should you need to call a poison centre.
- **Avoid mixing different cleaning products together**. Mixing can cause chemical reactions that produce dangerous gases.
- **Avoid using cannabis products and e-cigarettes in front of children**. Studies suggest that child poisoning may be linked to imitative behaviour, as children often want to do the same things their parents and caregivers do.
- Only 40 per cent of Canadian parents report knowing about local poison resources. **Keep the poison centre phone number stored in your cellphone or in a visible location, such as on the fridge**.



If a possible poisoning occurs, contact your local poison centre.

In case of loss of consciousness or difficulty breathing, call 911.

Visit parachute.ca/poisoning for a list of poison centres across Canada, and to learn more about how to #CheckForPoisons.

This material is made possible through a financial contribution from Health Canada; the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.