

Safe Medication Storage and Healthy Aging

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Nothing to disclose

Objectives

- Describe the importance of safe storage and disposal of medication
- Outline strategies using a case-based approach
- Discuss the role of the poison center

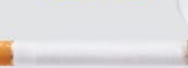
A Different Way to Think About Poisoning

Poisoning is the #1
cause of accidental
injury death in NJ
and the USA

Adults are most likely
to experience
clinically serious
outcomes or death

WHAT IS A POISON?

A poison is anything that can make you sick or kill you if used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person.

Substance	Toxic Category*	Lethal Dose LD50 (mg/kg)** smaller numbers = greater toxicity
 botulin	Super toxic	0.00001
 strychnine	Super toxic	1-2
 vitamin D	Extremely toxic	10
 cyanide	Extremely toxic	10
 nicotine	Extremely toxic	50
 DDT pesticide	Very toxic	113-800
 caffeine	Very toxic	192
 Rotenone pesticide used in organic production	Very toxic	132-1500

Substance	Toxic Category*	Lethal Dose LD50 (mg/kg)** smaller numbers = greater toxicity
 acetaminophen pain killer	Moderately toxic	1944
 sodium chloride table salt	Moderately toxic	3000
 sodium bicarbonate used in baking	Moderately toxic	4220
 glyphosate weed killer	Slightly toxic	5600
 ethanol alcohol	Slightly toxic	7000
 citric acid found in citrus fruit	Slightly toxic	12,000
 sucrose sugar	Practically non-toxic	30,000
 water	Practically non-toxic	90,000

A New View of Poison Control

Traditional View	Today's Reality
Poison Control is only for parents of young children	Poison Control is for EVREYONE!
Calls are mostly about children getting into things	Adults account for the most serious outcomes
"Poison" = Household cleaner	Poison = medications, supplements, drug interactions, dosing mistakes
Emergencies only	Questions, prevention, medication errors, and emergencies
Something to call for someone else	A resource you need for yourself



Poison prevention isn't just about
protecting children.

It's about protecting people at every
stage of life.

(Un)Safe Storage



Safe Storage = More Than Childproofing

**Safe storage is about making
everyday use safer—not just
limiting access.**

Which one is your medication?



Real Scenario

- A 68-year-old female with rheumatoid arthritis takes her weekly medicine incorrectly, instead takes it daily
- **Methotrexate**
 - Used to treat cancer in high doses
 - Rheumatologic/autoimmune conditions at lower doses
 - High risk for severe toxicity if taken incorrectly: bone marrow suppression, organ failure
 - May be fatal



Real Scenario

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Real Scenario

- A 79-year-old male accidentally takes his wife's medications
- They are stored together in the cabinet, “all look alike” prescription bottles



Real Scenario

- What did he take?
- Her meds:
 - Amlodipine
 - Atorvastatin
 - Metoprolol
 - Glimepride



Real Scenario

"My Doctor Increased
My Dose"

A 72-year-old man is told during a visit that his diabetes medication will be increased.

A few days later he picks up his prescription and notices:

- The tablet looks different
- The instructions have changed

When he gets home, he has questions about the new medication and how it should be used, but the doctor's office is closed for the evening.



Real Scenario

"My Medication Looks Different"

A 68-year-old receives her month prescription refill in the mail.

She notices that her blood pressure medication, which has always been a small white round tablet, is now a large pink oval tablet.

She tries to contact her doctor, but the office is sending calls to voicemail, and she can't get through to the pharmacy.

How the Poison Center Can Help

- Identify the medication
- Determine whether it is likely the same prescription from a different manufacturer
- Review the medication list for safety concerns
- Help decide whether the medication should be taken, held, or confirmed with the pharmacy
- Provide guidance while awaiting follow-up from the prescriber

Poison Control is for Everyone!!!

- The **New Jersey Poison Control Center** is not just a resource for parents—
- It's a **24/7 public health partner** for:
 - People of every age
 - Caregivers
 - Healthcare providers
 - Communities supporting healthy aging

Poison Control is for Everyone!!!

- 24/7/365 medical helpline: 800-222-1222.
- Free, confidential, expert guidance from doctors, pharmacists, nurses, and toxicologists.
- Based at Rutgers NJMS in Newark, NJ.
- Handling 50,000+ cases annually.
- Data-driven, prevention-focused, community-engaged.

Poison Control is for Everyone!!!

- Most poisonings we see are **not intentional**. They happen during everyday moments:
 - A missed dose turns into a double dose
 - Two medications interact unexpectedly
 - A product is mistaken for something else

These are **normal human errors**,
especially as routines get more complex.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL THE POISON CENTER?

Collect patient history and information on the exposure;



How old is the patient?



How much do they weigh?



What is the name of the product or substance involved?



How was the patient exposed to the substance? (ingestion, touching, etc.)



How much of the substance was involved in the exposure?

**If you have access to the bottle/package the substance
is in, it is best to have it with you when you call**

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU CALL THE POISON CENTER?

At Home Treatment/ No Treatment Necessary

Advice on how to “self treat” or treat at home

Follow up call to ensure the patient is recovering
and/or has not experienced any adverse effects



Coordination of Care

Arrange for transportation and/or treatment

Assist in obtaining antidotes if necessary

Participate in treatment

Follow the case to completion offering treatment
advice when necessary





BEHIND THE HOTLINE

- Medical Consultations
- Public Education
- Community Outreach
- Free Materials & Resources
- Professional Education

Why Safe Storage Matters

- Prevents medication mix-ups
- Reduces the risk of falls, overdoses, and adverse events
- Supports independence and healthy aging
- Protects family members, visitors, and pets
- Makes everyday medication use safer and simpler



3 Keys to Safe Storage

1. Location

2. Access

3. Organization



3 Keys to Safe Storage

1. Location

- Stored in a **consistent, designated place**
- Away from heat, moisture, and food areas
- Not left out on counters, tables, or bedside areas

3 Keys to Safe Storage

2. Access

- **Out of reach or secured** when appropriate
- Especially important in homes with:
 - Visitors (children, grandchildren)
 - Cognitive concerns
 - Risk of misuse

3 Keys to Safe Storage

3. Organization

- Kept in **original containers with labels**
- Clearly separated by person and purpose
- Structured to support **routine and accuracy**

Find safe storage practices that work for
you.

Safe storage should be
**accessible, simple, and tailored to the
individual.**

Safe Storage That Works in Real Life

- Arthritis or limited hand strength
- Difficulty opening child-resistant caps
- Limited mobility or fall risk
- Small living spaces
- Vision or memory changes

The safest system is one that people can **use easily and consistently every day.**

Practical Safe Storage Solutions

Use “Easy-Open but Still Safe” Options

- Ask pharmacists for **easy-open caps** (non–child-resistant when appropriate)
- Pair with:
 - A **secure storage box**
 - A **designated storage area**

Practical Safe Storage Solutions

Use Visual & Physical Cues

- Large-print labels
- Color-coded containers
- Separate morning vs evening medications

Practical Safe Storage Solutions

Simplify the Setup

- Use a **weekly pill organizer** (filled carefully or with help)
- Keep only **current medications** in the main area
- Store extras or backup supplies separately

Practical Safe Storage Solutions

Create a "Safe Zone"

- Designate one **consistent, clutter-free space**
 - Away from food
 - Away from shared household items
 - Easy to access but not in high-traffic areas

Practical Safe Storage Solutions

- Less clutter = Less risk
- Reduce risk – don't create new barriers.
- Build a routine
- Have a system you can use easily and consistently

PREVENTING OPIOID DEATHS

THREE WAYS TO SAVE LIVES



PREVENTION

- Keep all medicine out of children's reach and get rid of old or unneeded products.
- Ask if any of your medicine are opioids, and keep an up-to-date medicine list for your doctors.
- Do not combine opioids with similar medicines or alcohol.
- Do not take medicine prescribed to others.
- Call poison control for questions about drug combinations, misuse.



RESPONSE

Call 911 immediately if someone cannot be awakened!

OTHER SIGNS OF OPIOID OVERDOSE:

- Slow or no breaths
- Noisy breathing
- Vomiting
- Cool, wet skin
- Very small pupils

Use naloxone (if available) while waiting for rescue.



RECOVERY

- Seek professional treatment for addiction to opioids including prescription pain medicine, heroin, or fentanyl.
- Get support from family, friends, and doctors.
- Keep naloxone handy for others who may be at risk, or yourself in case of relapse.
- Avoid medicines that contain opioids or similar compounds.



LET'S TALK

- Have a challenge? We help.
- Seeing trends? Tell us.
- Someone in crisis? Call us.
- 1-800-222-1222 | www.njpies.org

1-800-222-1222



Call
1-800-222-1222

Text
973-339-0702

Chat
www.njpies.org

FAST. FREE. EXPERT ADVICE.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL THE NJ POISON CENTER?

Medical experts are available 24/7 to answer questions, provide information and offer emergency medical advice.



Questions

You have a question
about something
you think could possibly
be dangerous



Information

You're looking for
information
about something that
could be considered
poison



Emergency Support

Emergency support if you
think someone has touch,
tasted, or
smelled something that
could make them sick,
hurt, or kill them

1-800-222-1222



Save the # in your phone!!!



1-800-222-1222

