



## Poison Prevention Education Teaching Plan for Upper Elementary and Middle School (4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>)

### Teaching Objectives

1. Enable the student to identify potentially hazardous substances, their different forms, and how they should be safely stored.
2. Help students acquire safe habits that will provide self protection.
3. Students will learn about poison prevention and medications.
4. Students will gain understanding of the effects of inhalants on the body.
5. Guidance on first aid treatment of poisonings will be given regarding poison on the skin, in the eyes, and inhaled.
6. Reach parents with information about poison prevention and what to do in an emergency through take-home materials.
7. Increase awareness of the West Virginia Poison Center and the services it provides.

### Key Concepts

1. Anything can be a poison if not used correctly, especially if used in the wrong amount. One can be poisoned by eating, drinking, touching, or inhaling a potential poison.
2. There are many dangerous items throughout the home, including the yard and garage.
3. Simply because something is legal does not mean it is safe to use, such as inhalants.
4. Call the West Virginia Poison Center in case of a poisoning.

*Note: Teaching instructions are italicized.*

## Introduction

*If the students are unfamiliar with you, tell them a little about yourself.*

Hi, I am \_\_\_\_\_. I am a volunteer for the West Virginia Poison Center and I currently work for \_\_\_\_\_. *You may add anything else you would like them to know about you.*

Have you or someone you know ever been poisoned? Did you know that being stung by a bee is a poisoning?

Do you know someone who has taken too much medication at one time? Do you know the steps to take in the event of a poisoning such as this?

Did you know there is a West Virginia Poison Center to call about poisons?

Today we are going to talk about poisons and learn ways to help prevent poisonings from happening.

## What is a Poison?

What is a poison?

A poison is anything that is not used for its intended or designed purpose that can be dangerous. Many things can harm you or make you sick if you taste, touch, smell or get it in your eyes or on your skin.

Poisons can be in many forms, such as solid, liquid, spray or gas. Solids are such items as pill medicine or plants. Liquids can be thin, like most cleaning products, or thick, like facial creams. Sprays are usually found packaged in spray cans or spray bottles, such as spray paint, and can be dangerous if inhaled. Gases can be invisible and may come from such things as car exhaust pipes or faulty gas stoves and heaters.

## Where are poisons found?

Where can you find poisons?

Poisons can be found anywhere. Most rooms of your house probably have poisons in them, including the garage and yard.

Many poisons can be found in the kitchen, such as household cleaners. These products should only be used as directed on the label. Therefore, always read the label before use

and keep the product in its original container. Never mix household cleaners as they can put off harmful fumes. After use, be sure these products are immediately put away. The bathroom also houses potential poisons, such as cosmetic or personal care items and medicine. Cosmetic or personal care products are interesting to children. The products may look pretty and grasp the child's attention or the child may want to be like older parents and siblings who use these items. So, cosmetic and personal care products should be kept out of reach of children. Although many people need medicine to make them feel better, medicines can be dangerous if taken by those who do not need them. Only take medicine prescribed to you or over-the-counter medications and vitamins that you need. Always read the labels on all medications and take medications as directed, including vitamins and over the counter medicines, which can still be harmful if not taken correctly.

The garage and outside can be dangerous areas as well with automotive supplies, plants and animals. Automotive supplies are especially dangerous as they often look like other products that can be consumed. Even though it is dangerous, people often put automotive products in containers without labels. To be safe, these items should be stored in their original containers away from those who should not be using them, especially small children. Plants, including those found in the house, can be poisonous. It is important to know about the plants in your house and around your house. Do not touch or eat any unidentified plants, including plants with berries and wild mushrooms.

You also have to beware of snake and spider bites. There are 2 poisonous snakes and 2 poisonous spiders in West Virginia. Do you know what they are? They are the Northern Copperhead and the Timber Rattlesnake. If you have been bitten, call the West Virginia Poison Center for treatment information.

### What is an inhalant?

Inhalants are commonly used products in the home that contain chemicals that have mood-altering behaviors or give a "high" when inhaled. Many kids think they are harmless. These chemicals are dangerous when inhaled through the nose or mouth and may cause serious side effects on the body, including death. Inhalants are unpredictable on how they will affect your body and sudden death may occur from only one use. Other effects from inhalants are hallucinations, nausea, nosebleeds, and problems with the liver, kidney and lungs. Those who are long-term inhalant abusers may develop irreversible brain damage. Therefore, chronic inhalant abusers may permanently lose the ability to perform everyday tasks like walking, talking and thinking. It is important to remember that any product that alters your behavior is not safe, even if the product is legal. If someone you know is using inhalants, it is best to tell a trusted adult.

### Who is at risk of poisonings?

Anyone can be poisoned, but those under 6 years of age are at the highest risk of being poisoned. Children are curious and love to explore. Often items end up in their mouths. They may even taste something harmful. If you have younger siblings or babysit younger children, be sure to watch them for potential poisonings.

Most poisonings occur at home, so learning how to properly store items is important in lessening the number of poisonings in your home. Teaching children to stay away from potential poisons and learning to always ask an adult before touching or putting anything in their mouth is important in protecting them. It is important to help adults watch for potential poisons if you have little kids around your house.

### How to prevent poisonings?

- Make sure all potential poisons are put away and out of reach of those at risk, especially children.
- Teach young children to always ask first before touching or putting anything in their mouth.
- Keep items in their original containers.
- Always read the label and directions before use of any item.
- Never mix chemicals.
- Only take your own medication and make sure to follow dosing instructions.
- Never inhale products to get high.
- Put products away immediately after use.
- Keep the West Virginia Poison Center number on or near all of your phones.

### Emergency Treatment

Treatment for poisonings differs depending on the type and amount of the item involved. Therefore, it is important to call the medical experts at the West Virginia Poison Center for emergency assistance. However, if a person is unconscious or not breathing, call 911.

If you find someone with a poison, remove the person from the harmful poison. Immediately contact the West Virginia Poison Center, even if you aren't sure they have actually been poisoned. Do not wait for symptoms to appear to call the poison center.

If the poison was taken by mouth, such as a pill or drinking a household chemical, call the West Virginia Poison Center. Follow directions from the poison specialist.

If the poison is on the skin, such as a spilled chemical, remove any clothing that touched the poison. Rinse the area with lukewarm water; wash the area with soap and water, and rinse. Then call the West Virginia Poison Center for further direction.

If the poison gets in the eye, flush the eye with lukewarm water for 15 minutes. Then call the West Virginia Poison Center for more information.

If a person inhales or breathes the poison, remove the person from the poison into fresh air. Make sure the area is ventilated before returning inside. Call the West Virginia Poison Center for assistance.

## The West Virginia Poison Center

The West Virginia Poison Center is available to prevent and/or treat poisonings in any person or animal throughout West Virginia. We take calls from anyone seeking information about poisons or poisonings, such as households, places of employment, and medical offices and hospitals. All calls to the poison center are answered by medical experts in poisons, such as specially trained nurses, pharmacists, or doctors. The West Virginia Poison Center is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and all calls are free and confidential. Call 1-800-222-1222 if a poisoning is even suspected. This call to the poison center may save the life of someone you know.

### Closing

I hope you have learned new information about poisons and poison prevention today. It is vital to remember the importance of keeping poisons put away to prevent potential accidents. Also remember the importance of calling the West Virginia Poison Center with any poison questions or poison emergencies.