

Jeb Bush
Governor



M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Thursday, March 16, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Director
PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
727-824-6908 (for media use only)

National Poison Prevention Week is March 19-25, 2006

Most Child Poisonings Occur at Home

Every 7 minutes, a child arrives at an emergency room due to a suspected poisoning

About 78,000 children under five years old visited U.S. hospital emergency rooms due to unintentional poisonings in 2003 – about one every seven minutes, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recently reported. Most of these poisonings included products commonly found in the home.

More than nine of every ten suspected poison exposures occur at home with readily-available household products. About 30 children die from poisonings each year, down from 450 in the 1960s. Great progress has been made in reducing poison-related fatalities, but greater awareness is needed to prevent needless deaths.

Poison centers nationwide received more than one million calls about poison exposures involving children five years and younger in 2003. Among the potentially toxic household products involved with calls to the poison centers were:

- Personal care products, including baby oil and mouthwash;
- Cleaning substances, including drain openers and oven cleaners;
- Over-the-counter pain relievers – including ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and aspirin – and cough and cold medicines;
- Hydrocarbons, such as lamp oil and furniture polish; and
- Adult-strength vitamins and supplements containing iron.

When repackaged at home in non-child-resistant containers, medicines and potentially hazardous household products become even more accessible and dangerous for young children. Grandparents who keep their prescription drugs in non-child-resistant pill boxes should be especially aware of this risk. Child-resistant packaging doesn't work if it's not used properly.

Many poisoning incidents occur while the products are in use and a parent or caregiver steps away or is distracted for just a moment. Children can get hold of a product and swallow it during the short time it takes to answer a phone call or doorbell.

(MORE)



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

POISON PREVENTION WEEK – Page 2

Here, from the **Pinellas County Health Department**, are some tips to keep your family safe:

- Keep the poison control center's number, **1-800-222-1222** and your doctor's phone number handy.
- Keep products in original containers with labels and out of the reach of children.
- Get down to a child's height and look for potential hazards from their point of view.
- Make sure children wash hands after using the bathroom and before eating.
- If your children are in day care, check to see where the day care provider keeps cleaning products, medicines and other potentially hazardous products to make sure these products are locked up and out of children's reach.
- Read labels and follow directions and precautions for safe and effective use, storage, and first aid.
- Use hazardous products away from children, toys, food, and pets, as directed.
- Store products out of the reach of children; even if you don't have small children. Many poisonings happen when children visit homes where no children live.
- Properly dispose of unused or unnecessary household products and unused or expired medicines.
- Check the playground equipment where your children play to be sure that none of the wood has been treated with potentially hazardous chemicals.
- Induce vomiting *only* if a physician or a poison control center instructs you to do so.
- If a household chemical has been ingested, **call the poison control center 1-800-222-1222** immediately. Have the label ready when you call.

The number of calls to the poison center and emergency department visits proves that children act fast, and so do poisons. Parents must act fast as well. If your child swallows or handles a potentially dangerous product, immediately **call the poison center hotline at 1-800-222-1222**. Your call will be answered by experts at your local poison center.

To get a free packet of poison prevention publications, write to "Poison Prevention Packet," CPSC, Washington, DC 20207, or visit www.poisonprevention.org.

###

The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.
www.PinellasHealth.com