



Poison HOTLINE

Partnership between Iowa Health System and
University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

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Did you know

Poinsettias are not the deadly plant they were once thought to be. Handling or eating small amounts of poinsettia seldom results in any symptoms. A mild rash, nausea, and vomiting may occasionally be seen. The greater the amount ingested, the greater the potential for stomach irritation. This plant should be kept out of the reach of children and pets, but should not be considered highly dangerous.

Note: Even plants that are non-toxic can be a choking hazard to a small child.

Call the ISPC at 1-800-222-1222 if you think someone has eaten or touched a plant that may be poisonous.

Camphor

Camphor is an essential oil frequently found in topical ointments, liniments, and creams, such as Ben-Gay® and Vicks® VapoRub®. Camphor is most commonly used dermally to relieve arthritic and rheumatic pains, neuralgia, and back pain. It may also be applied to cold sores and as a chest rub for bronchitis and chest congestion. It is often used in steam vaporizers to help control coughs and to loosen congestion due to colds. A 1983 US FDA ruling requires camphor concentrations in non-prescription products be no greater than 11%. Camphor is also used in the manufacture of many other products, including celluloid, explosives, moth repellents, and soaps.

Camphor—"alcanfor" in Spanish—is widely used in many cultures to ward off illness or evil spirits. Some populations also use camphor as an insecticide, an insect repellent and as a room air freshener.

Camphor has a characteristic pungent odor and is rapidly absorbed through the skin, GI and respiratory tracts. Toxicity is usually a result of ingesting the product, but can occur through excessive skin or inhalation exposure. Camphor products can be very dangerous for children – even small amounts can cause seizures in children. Symptoms of camphor poisoning in children include stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, irritability, agitation, and seizures. Symptoms may occur within 5 to 20 minutes after exposure, but seizures have been delayed up to 9 hours post-exposure. Seizures or coma may appear without warning.

Children or adults with a history suggestive of ingesting more than 30 milligrams/kilogram of camphor should be referred to a health care facility for observation. People with deliberate ingestions or cases of suspected malicious exposure (eg; child abuse or neglect) should be transported to the ED, possibly by ambulance. Patients who have developed either severe gastrointestinal or neurologic symptoms of poisoning should also be admitted regardless of the amount ingested.

Camphor may be a common, yet unrecognized, source of seizures in children in certain ethnic populations that use it as a natural remedy.

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POISON
Help
1-800-222-1222

The logo for Poison Help. It features the word "POISON" in a bold, black, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the word "Help" is written in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the word "Help" is a red pill bottle with a white cap and a white skull and crossbones symbol on its side. Below the word "Help" and the pill bottle is the phone number "1-800-222-1222" in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Post and share this edition of **Poison Hotline** with your colleagues. Send comments or questions to Poison Hotline, 712-234-8775 (fax) or nobletf@ihs.org. To subscribe or unsubscribe from this distribution list, contact the Iowa Poison Center education office at 712-279-3717. Read past issues of **Poison Hotline** at www.iowapoison.org.