

Iowa Poison Control Center – Elementary Curriculum Guide

This curriculum guide is intended as a flexible resource to support instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use the sections and materials that best meet the needs of their students and teaching goals.

Introduction

More than 55% of the reported poisonings to the Iowa Poison Control Center occur in kids and teenagers. That is over 13,000 calls every year, or 35 calls every single day just in Iowa. Children are naturally curious and explore their world by eating, touching, and smelling things.

Sometimes, these things can be poisonous. Also, most children cannot read labels and may eat, drink, or spray something that is harmful.

Poison Information

Ask, “Can anyone tell me what a poison is?”

1. A poison is something that can make you sick or hurt you if you eat, drink, touch, or smell it.
2. Ways that poisons get in your body:
 - **Mouth:** swallowing a poison
 - **Nose:** breathing a poison
 - **Eyes:** getting a poison in the eyes
 - **Skin:** getting a poison on the skin, or from bites and stings
3. Poisons are found everywhere — in their home and outside, too. Examples include:
 - **Bathroom:** shampoo, medicines, cleaning products
 - **Bedroom:** makeup, perfume
 - **Kitchen:** soap, cleaning sprays, dishwasher pods
 - **Backyard:** plants, berries, mushrooms
 - **Garage:** gasoline, weed killers, windshield washer fluid

- **Purse/Diaper Bag/Backpacks:** medicines, diaper cream, hand sanitizer.
4. Poisons may look and smell nice, even though they can be harmful.
- Perfumes smell good and look pretty but should never be tasted or sprayed in the eyes.
 - Some medicines may taste good but taking too much can make you very sick.
 - Some poisons look like food or drinks (for example, cleaning products that look like juice).
 - Always ask a trusted adult before eating, drinking, touching, or smelling anything.
5. Poisons can be found in many different forms:
- **Solids:** powders, pills, plants
 - **Liquids:** some are clear like water, some are colorful like juice
 - **Sprays:** aerosol cans, pump sprays
 - **Invisibles:** fumes, gases, carbon monoxide, car exhaust

Medication Safety

- **The Right Amount:** Doctors give the right amount of medicine to help you get better. Taking more than that can make you very sick.
- **The Right Kind:** Only take your own medicine. Adult medicines or someone else's medicine can be dangerous.
- **The Right Way:** Always have a trusted adult help you take medicine. Never take someone else's medication.

The Iowa Poison Control Center

- The place to call if someone has been poisoned or if you have a question about poisons.
- Calls are answered **24 hours a day, every day of the year.**
- **Toll-free number: 1-800-222-1222** — connects callers to their nearest poison center. It does not matter where you live, you call the same number.

- The Iowa Poison Control Center serves the entire state of Iowa.
- Calls are private and free.
- Calls are answered by **nurses and pharmacists trained in toxicology.**
- Website: www.iowapoison.org

Learning Activity Ideas

Candy vs. Medicine

- Use poster or pre-made display.
- Have children try to guess which item is candy and which is medicine.
- Explain that it is very difficult to tell the difference between candy and medicine. Kids should never touch or taste something they found on the floor, counter, in someone's purse, etc., even if it looks like candy.

Play "What If?"

Ask the children:

- What if your sibling was playing with a spray bottle with liquid in it?
- What if you found a bottle that looks like juice in the garage?
- What if you saw berries growing in the park?
- What would you do if you found a pill on Grandma's counter?
- Discuss the importance of **asking an adult** before touching or tasting anything unfamiliar.

Poison Collage

Have students cut pictures of potentially poisonous items from magazines and create a collage. Encourage discussion about how those items can be harmful.

Scavenger Hunt List

Have students make a list of possible poisons in their home (bathroom, kitchen, garage, etc.).

Practice Emergency Telephone Skills

- Remind children to **stay calm** and that the Poison Center is there to help.
- Review when to call **911** (if someone is not breathing, unconscious, or having a seizure).
- Review when to call **1-800-222-1222** for poison emergencies or questions.
- Remind students that the poison center helpers will ask:
 - The name of the product
 - The person's name, age, and weight
 - The phone number and zip code
 - What symptoms the person has

Poison Prevention and Safety Tips

- Grownups should lock up poisons and medicines and keep them out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Keep the **Poison Center number (1-800-222-1222)** near every phone, on the refrigerator, and saved in cell phones.
- Always ask an adult before touching or tasting anything.

Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, each student should be able to state:

- What a poison is.
- Three poison prevention/safety measures.
- The four ways poisons can get into the body.
- To never taste, touch, or smell something without asking an adult first.
- Only take medicine with a trusted adult.
- The number to call for a poison question or emergency — **1-800-222-1222**.

Teachers: Please provide your feedback by scanning the QR Code below.

