



Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

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Did you know

Sunscreen protects the skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Sunscreens containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide reflect the UV rays away from the skin. Sunscreens containing para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA), benzophenones, cinnamates, and salicylates absorb the UV rays before they can penetrate the skin.

Sunscreens may cause skin irritation, rash, and allergic contact dermatitis. PABA-like ingredients can cause photo-allergic skin reactions, which increase the risk of a sunburn. If a skin reaction occurs, switch to a different active ingredient.

Small ingestions of most sunscreens may cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

If sunscreen gets in the eye, rinse the eyes with water. Sun screens that are water-resistant may require longer eye irrigations.

Pyrethrin Insecticides

Pyrethrins are one of the most common pesticides used today. The chemical is used to control mosquitoes, fleas, flies, moths, ants and other pests. Derived from the chrysanthemum flower, pyrethrin is used in bug foggers, sprays, pet shampoos, powders, topical insect repellents and more. Typically, pyrethrins can be used on certain pets and livestock, crops, plants and used in some head lice products. Because of the high availability of pyrethrins to the public, exposures are common.

When an insect touches or eats the pyrethrin, it becomes paralyzed and ultimately dies. Due to possessing a more sophisticated nervous system that is relatively protective against these effects, it takes a substantially increased pyrethrin exposure to cause toxicity than a human. As such, humans typically tolerate mild exposures well.

Human exposures occur by routes of inhalation, dermal, ocular, or ingestion. Examples of this may include: (1) use in an enclosed space, (2) a change in wind direction causing products to blow back in to one's face, or (3) inadvertent contact with pets being treated with pyrethrins.

Generally, pyrethrins are low in toxicity to people and other mammals. Dermal exposure can cause irritation, numbness or tingling at the site of contact. Ocular exposures can cause irritation, tearing, redness, blurred vision. Inhalation can cause respiratory irritation, cough, runny nose, breathing difficulty. Ingestion can cause oral irritation, vomiting, diarrhea, drooling. In rare cases, significant ingestions can cause tremors, convulsions and seizures.

If exposed to pyrethrins, wash the area with soap and water and change into clean clothes. If inhaled, go out into fresh air. Those with underlying respiratory disease or asthma may have more significant respiratory distress and need medical attention. Eye exposures will need a 15 to 20-minute eye irrigation with tepid tap water. After irrigation, let the eyes rest for about 20 to 30 minutes, as the water can also be irritating to the eye. After the rest period, the eye should be back to normal. If it is not, then you may need eye exam.

When using or applying products containing pyrethrins, make sure to follow recommended directions on packaging. This may include using gloves or mask and making sure you are up-wind if spraying or using dusts or powders. If there are ever any questions about exposure to a pyrethrin, please call us at the Iowa Poison Control Center. We are happy to help.

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