IOWA POISON CONTROL CENTER

Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

October 2025

Did you know …

With Halloween and trick-or-treating just around the corner, it's important to be aware of potential safety hazards. Here are a few key ones to keep in mind:

- Glowsticks – These fun toys contain an irritating chemical called dibutyl phthalate. While generally considered low in toxicity, contact with the skin, mouth, or eyes can cause some localized irritation. First aid includes flushing eyes with plenty of water, washing the skin with soap/water, and rinsing the mouth with small amount of milk or water if ingested. Symptoms are typically short-lived.

- Dry Ice – It is extremely cold (~-109°F) and can cause frostbite to exposed or unprotected skin. Always wear insulated gloves and protective clothing to avoid frostbite. As dry ice sublimates it gives off carbon dioxide gas which can be an asphyxiation risk as well.

What's Hiding in Your Closet?

Do you use mothballs in your home? While using mothballs may seem like a simple way to protect clothing or items in storage, they can pose a serious health risk. Most mothballs are made with **paradichlorobenzene** or **naphthalene** – both of which can be toxic if inhaled, touched, or ingested. Accidental ingestion is most common in children.

Paradichlorobenzene inhalation can cause nausea, headache, and vomiting, as well as irritation to the eyes and nose. In rare cases, ingestions can cause liver toxicity, hemolytic anemia, and methemoglobinemia.

Naphthalene exposure may cause irritation to the eyes, skin, and mucous membranes. Eye contact with the solid material may result in conjunctivitis, superficial injury to the cornea, and diminished visual acuity. Skin exposure may cause hypersensitivity dermatitis. Ingestion can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, and mental status changes. Severe toxicity can include seizures, coma, hemolytic anemia, and methemoglobinemia.

At home treatment depends on the route of exposure and type of mothball.

- **Ingestion:** Asymptomatic, healthy people with ingestion of a single mothball (or less) can usually be monitored at home. However, if a person with glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency ingests one or more of a naphthalene mothball, they should be seen by a healthcare provider immediately.
- **Inhalation:** If symptoms occur after inhalation of either mothball type, quickly move to fresh air.
- **Ocular Exposure:** Rinse eyes with water for 15 minutes.
- **Dermal Exposure:** Wash the skin with soap and water for 15 minutes.

In a hospital setting, treatment for severe naphthalene poisoning may involve several supportive measures. Methylene blue can be given for methemoglobinemia, while blood transfusions may be needed if hemolysis occurs. IV benzodiazepines are used to control seizures, and oxygen therapy may be required for shortness of breath. If bronchospasm develops, patients may receive breathing treatments and corticosteroids. Additional care includes IV fluids to maintain hydration and anti-nausea medications to help manage persistent vomiting.

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