



Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

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Did you know

Camphor is found in a variety of OTC products including muscle rubs, topical cold remedies, cold sore treatments, and many others. Its characteristic scent is often described as “mothball-like” – which is accurate given its use in some mothball preparations as well.

Inadvertent ingestion of camphor containing products can cause nausea and vomiting, or worse, seizures, respiratory failure, and death.

Seizures associated with camphor toxicity occur relatively quickly. Oftentimes within 1-2 hours. Benzodiazepines can be used for seizures or escalation to phenobarbital or propofol if needed for additional seizure control.

Patients with mild camphor toxicity rarely require more than supportive care.

Call **1-800-222-1222** for treatment recommendations related to these or any agents.

Over The Counter (OTC) Topicals

From summertime sunburn remedies to muscle aches and more, OTC topicals can be an effective option to treat ailments at home. While generally safe when used correctly, these products can lead to toxicity - especially in children, those with preexisting conditions, or when improperly applied.

Lidocaine: Commonly used as topical anesthetic for minor skin irritations, burns, or hemorrhoids, lidocaine works by blocking sodium channels and inhibiting nerve impulses. Toxicity can occur with large applications, use on damaged skin, mucosal use, or when applied under occlusive dressings. Caution should be used in children and elderly due to variable skin absorptions and in people with hepatic impairment due to reduced metabolism. Signs of toxicity include dizziness, confusion, seizure, bradycardia, hypotension, and arrhythmias.

Benzocaine: Frequently used as an oral and topical anesthetic, benzocaine blocks nerve conduction via sodium channel inhibition. Methemoglobinemia may occur with mucosal use, especially in young children under the age of 2 and people with G6PD deficiency. Signs of methemoglobinemia include cyanosis unresponsive to oxygen, headache, shortness of breath, coma, and death.

Methyl Salicylate: Often used to reduce muscle and joint pain, methyl salicylate products work as a rubefacient, causing dilation of capillaries and an increase in blood circulation in the area of application. As a counterirritant and salicylate, these products also have anti-inflammatory effects. Absorption can increase with heat, exercise, and on broken skin, raising risk of toxicity. Heating pads should never be used with salicylate creams. Signs of toxicity can include nausea, vomiting, tinnitus, respiratory alkalosis, metabolic acidosis, hyperthermia, confusion, and coma.

Capsaicin: Typically used to relieve nerve pain and muscle soreness, capsaicin works by depleting substance P in peripheral neurons. It initially causes a burning sensation followed by desensitization. Local dermal irritation is common. Use caution in individuals with asthma, as it can cause coughing, sneezing, and bronchospasm. If ingested, capsaicin can cause intense burning of the mouth and GI tract leading to nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. After use, wash hands and avoid contact with the eyes and mucosal membranes to avoid cross contamination.

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