



Poison HOTLINE

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

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Did you know

Anhydrous ammonia is a fertilizer that is commonly applied to crop fields of Iowa in the fall and the spring. Anhydrous ammonia readily dissolves in water, creating ammonium hydroxide, a strong caustic.

Many anhydrous ammonia exposures reported to the ISPCC result from equipment failure and / or human error while working with anhydrous ammonia. The eyes, nose, respiratory tract and sweaty skin are very easily burned after contact with anhydrous ammonia fumes.

For exposures to, or health questions about, anhydrous ammonia, contact the ISPCC at 1-800-222-1222.

Will the Absence of Syrup of Ipecac Affect the Management of Poisonings?

Production of Syrup of Ipecac Stopped in US

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists released a bulletin on October 12, 2010, stating that the last manufacturer of syrup of ipecac in the US has stopped making the product. Syrup of ipecac (SOI) had been on back order for several months because of a shortage in raw materials. There are no other manufactures of SOI. The bulletin is not a recall of SOI that is already on store shelves or in the distribution chain, and you may still find SOI on the shelves in some stores. However, because of the dramatic decrease in the use of SOI for poisonings in the past few years, many stores no longer have SOI in stock.

While SOI has been available over the counter for more than 40 years, it has never been shown to be effective at improving the outcome of a poisoned patient. A guideline on the use of SOI published by the American Association of Poison Control Centers in 2005 stated that the effectiveness of SOI is substantially reduced if it is given more than 30 to 90 minutes after exposure, and that the amount of poison vomited up is both variable and unpredictable.

Complications which can arise from SOI use include choking, aspiration of the poison, drowsiness, lethargy, diarrhea, pneumomediastinum, Mallory-Weiss tears and aspiration pneumonia. Fatalities associated with the therapeutic use of SOI have been caused by diaphragmatic hernia, intracranial hemorrhage and gastric rupture.

In November, 2003, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement saying that, because of its lack of evidence in improving patient outcomes, SOI should no longer be used routinely as a poison treatment intervention in the home and that parents should safely dispose of the syrup of ipecac currently in their homes.

While there are very rare instances in which SOI may potentially benefit a specific patient (e.g. a person ingests a potentially lethal amount of a poison and is a great distance from a healthcare facility), the lack of SOI is unlikely to have much of an effect on the overall management of poisoned patients.

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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 large, bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the letter "e" in "Help" is a red pill bottle with a white skull and crossbones symbol on its label. Below "Help" 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.