**7 Drugs That Can Kill Children with a Single Pill**

Even parents who keep medicines out of their children's reach are at risk of an emergency.

The Emergency Medicine Clinics of North America notes that in 50 percent of all childhood accidental poisonings, the medication bottle was only "out" for a short amount of time as it was being used.

Here are some of the more common medicines that can lead to emergencies when accidentally ingested by kids:

- **Heart Pills** -- In children, they can cause dangerously low blood pressure and heart rate, and even lead to shock.

- **Muscle Rubs** -- Camphor is especially dangerous because ingesting it works so quickly; symptoms occur within 10-20 minutes, and often children can go into seizures without any warning.

- **Prescription Pain Medications** -- For an infant, even half a tablet of hydrocodone can be lethal.

- **Aspirin and Oil of Wintergreen** -- Oil of wintergreen is particularly hazardous because its pleasant smell tempts toddlers to ingest it, but one teaspoon of oil of wintergreen is the equivalent of nearly 90 baby aspirins -- a life-threatening dose for a toddler or child.

- **Antidepressants** -- After pain medications, antidepressants are the second highest cause of accidental death from poisoning in children younger than 6.

- **Blood Pressure Patches, Eye Drops, and Nasal Sprays** -- These medications, designed to be absorbed over time through your skin, can lead to serious consequences when ingested by a toddler. As little as 6 ml can lead to a coma.
• Diabetes Drugs -- As these medications are more commonly prescribed, the incidence of pediatric poisonings has also increased, with over 2,500 occurrences in the United States in 2001.

Sources:
» ABC News March 18, 2010
» Pediatric Emergency Medicine Practice March 2010

Comments:
It is no mystery to most of you reading this that the reliance on drugs to treat disease symptoms is a choice that results in hundreds of thousands of premature deaths every year in the U.S. alone and causes needless pain and suffering in millions of others.

One of the uncommonly appreciated side effects of this approach are the results of accidental use of these dangerous drugs.

A young child can grab a pill off the floor and swallow it in the blink of an eye. Tragically, that is often all it takes to cause life-threatening, and sometimes fatal, reactions in their small bodies.

There were nearly 2.5 million calls involving human exposure to poisons made in 2008, according to the American Association of Poison Control Centers’ National Poison Data System 26th Annual Report. Of them, half involved children younger than 6, and nearly 39 percent involved exposures to children younger than 3 years.

Because medications are so common, a child can be exposed not only at home when a parent takes a bottle out of the medicine cabinet, but also just about anywhere a pill can fall out of someone’s pocket. This is why it’s so important to be aware of the signs and symptoms of a medication poisoning.

What are the Signs Your Child Has Ingested a Potentially Lethal Medication?

If you see your child ingest a pill or medication of any kind, don’t wait to take action. Your child may appear fine at first, but deadly side effects can appear hours later when it’s too late.

So, if you’re in the United States, call 911 or the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 if you even suspect your child has eaten an adult (or unknown) medication. If you’re in another country, contact emergency help immediately.
Likewise, if your child is displaying any of the poisoning symptoms below, you should call for help immediately.

- Seizures
- Low blood pressure or heart rate
- Delirium
- Unusual sleepiness
- Lethargy
- Nausea or vomiting
- Agitation
- Coma

Most of you reading this are probably well aware of the importance of keeping all medications, whether prescription or over-the-counter, pill form or liquid, out of the reach of children. If you take any of the seven medications listed above, it is especially important to keep them away from your children at all times, because even a single pill can be deadly.

In addition to keeping these items in a cabinet out of children’s reach, there are simple child-safety locks that can be installed on cabinets to keep little hands out … and these devices can literally be lifesaving.

If you have to use drugs for any reason and have children who live with or visit you, it is also absolutely imperative NOT to remove the child-proof caps, and to be very careful not to drop any pills on the floor (at home or when you’re visiting a friend or in a public place).

Even eye drops and vapor rubs can quickly lead to seizures, lethargy, coma and death in toddlers, so please don’t take any chances.

**Even Medications Made for Children Can be Harmful**

Along with making sure your children do not accidentally ingest any lethal medications, you need to be very cautious with the drugs you intentionally give your children as well.

Just because a medication is easy to obtain over-the-counter (OTC) or is prescribed to you by a doctor doesn’t mean it’s harmless -- especially to young children.
In 2004 and 2005, adverse drug events were the third leading cause of nonfatal injuries among infants treated in hospital emergency departments. They were also the sixth leading cause of nonfatal injuries among children 1 to 4 years old.

Further, as often as drugs are administered to infants and young children, it’s easy to forget that 75 percent of all prescription drugs do NOT have labeling instructions for children, leaving their use in children up to your doctor’s discretion.

So using these drugs on kids is like throwing darts in the dark. It's pure guesswork.

**Throwing Darts in the Dark …**

Since information on how to prescribe medications to children is so scarce, doctors often rely on the flawed assumption that children are simply smaller versions of adults.

In reality, however, drugs act much differently in children. For instance, children may process drugs more quickly than adults do, and because children are still developing, drugs could stunt physical growth or impair emotional and cognitive development.

Among the limited number of drugs that have been tested for pediatric safety and effectiveness, it has been found that:

- One-fifth of drugs that work in adults are ineffective in children
- One-fifth of the drugs were being prescribed at the wrong dosage
- One-third of the drugs caused unexpected side effects, some of which were potentially fatal

A classic example of the dangers surrounding medications for kids was highlighted recently concerning children’s over-the-counter cold medicines.

These drugs were over prescribed to well-intentioned parents looking to soothe their children, despite the fact that there was very little evidence that they worked. Instead, there was growing evidence that many of these drugs were fraught with side effects.

Please realize that nearly all of the problems for which kids are given drugs can be resolved using natural approaches. If you have a specific challenge, such as ADHD, allergies or obesity,
that you’d like to address using safe, drug-free methods, please use the search feature at the top right of this page to get the answers you’re looking for.

**Other Common Poisons to Watch Out For**

Medications are a common poison for kids, but they’re not the only one. According to the [American Association of Poison Control Centers](https://www.aapcc.org/), the most common poisons for children are:

- Cosmetics such as perfume or nail polish, and personal care products such as deodorant and soap.
- Cleaning products (laundry detergent, floor cleaners, etc.).
- Pain medicines (analgesics) such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Foreign bodies and toys including silica gel packages to remove moisture in packaging and glow products.
- Topical preparations such as diaper rash products, hydrogen peroxide, acne preparations, or calamine lotion.

If you switch your home over to natural and safe cosmetics, personal care products and cleaning supplies, you can drastically cut down on your child’s risk of poisoning from such products.

However, even some “natural” products can be dangerous to kids. For instance, you need to be very careful with any supplements you take that contain iron. Iron overdose is a leading cause of poisoning deaths in children under 6, so keep any such supplements safely out of children’s reach.

Toothpaste that contains fluoride can also be very toxic, even if it’s marketed for children.

Although I recommend [ditching fluoride toothpaste for a number of reasons](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/healthywells.htm), it’s important to be aware that if your child swallows a large amount of fluoride-containing toothpaste, you need to call for emergency help immediately.