Every year in Canada, about 7 children under 14 die from poisoning. And many more need treatment; poisoning is the 2nd most common reason that children under 4 are admitted to hospital. Young children are at risk for poisoning because they:

- Are naturally curious
- Like to put things in their mouths
- Are small so even a small amount of poison or someone else’s medicine can be dangerous
- Breathe faster so they will inhale chemicals more quickly

Most of the time, children are poisoned at home. Parents and caregivers can prevent poisoning by planning ahead and taking some simple steps.

**Plan ahead.**
Children grow fast - are you ready for the next stage? As children learn to crawl and walk-they can get to places they never could before (and pretty quickly too!). And they like to put things in their mouths. Start planning ahead by thinking about:

- The cupboards, doors, purses and drawers they could open
- Shelves, dressers and counters they can reach
- Chairs and furniture they could climb on to reach higher

**You can also:**

- Keep all vitamins and medicines in the child resistant container they came in (many products that have poisoned children were taken out of their original container or not stored properly).
- Buy medicine in small amounts.
- Never try to get your child to take medicine by saying it is candy (this teaches them that all medicine is candy).
- Read medicine labels carefully each time and follow the instructions. Remember that the same medicine can come in stronger concentrations (for example, more mg of medication in each pill or teaspoon).
- Keep visitor’s purses and bags out of children’s reach.
- Be aware that many plants and berries in the garden are poisonous.

**Lock up:**

- Cleaning products (and keep these in their original container too)
- Alcohol (like mouthwash, beer, wine and liquor)
- Medicines, vitamins, herbal remedies and homeopathic medicines
- Antifreeze (like windshield washer fluid, gas line antifreeze or lock de-icer)
- Pesticides and fertilizer
What’s the rush?
Is your child really ready to play alone? Young children need to be watched closely by an adult. Supervision is the first line of defense in preventing poisoning. Having an adult close by will stop children from getting into things they shouldn’t.

Use it.
Using the right safety gear can make a big difference. Cupboard and door locks can keep children away from the things that could hurt them. Child resistant packaging will stop most children from getting into medicine—but some children are able to open it anyway. Lock medicines in a toolbox that you can lock with a separate key or combination lock.

Learn how.
Learn what to do if children swallow something that could poison them. Call St John’s Ambulance or the Canadian Red Cross about first aid courses in your area.

Want more info?
St. John’s Ambulance
http://www.sja.ca

Canadian Red Cross
http://www.croixrouge.ca

For expert advice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:
Ontario Poison Centre 1-800-268-9017
Québec Poison Control Centre 1-800-463-5060