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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Make a Safe Start to the School Year

Back-to-School Safety Tips from the Nation's Oldest Poison Center

Chicago, IL (August 19, 2014) . As students pack their book bags and get ready to embark on a brand new school year, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is encouraging families to take precautions against poison exposures.

Back to school time can be exciting for parents and kids alike, said IPC Medical Director Dr. Michael Wahl, MD. In the transition back to the classroom, it is important to be mindful of potentially harmful situations and to take measures to prevent them.

To prevent harmful exposures, the IPC offers the following tips:

School and Art Supplies – Most school and art supplies are minimally toxic, and a number of nontoxic products are available. Parents and teachers can take steps to help students be as safe as possible when handling supplies:

- Be sure children know how to safely use art supplies by
 - Carefully reading labels
 - Following directions for safe use and disposal
 - Cleaning up tables, desks, and counters appropriately
- Teach kids not to eat or drink while using art products

Hand sanitizer – Hand sanitizer can cause drowsiness, vomiting, and intoxication, due to the high alcohol content. Avoid misuse and unintentional ingestion by:

- Advising children on its proper use and purpose
- Supervising use of hand sanitizer
- Teaching children to apply a dime-sized amount to dry hands and rub hands together until completely dry
- Washing hands with soap and water as an alternative; it is the best method for removing dirt and germs
- Call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222 if hand sanitizer is ingested

Lunch Box Preparation – In order to ensure your child's lunch is safe, the IPC advises parents to:

- Wash hands thoroughly before preparing lunch boxes
- Properly prepare and store all foods to prevent food poisoning:

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold
- Pack foods in insulated containers
- Wash all fruits and vegetables

Medications and Miscellaneous – other tips for keeping kids healthy going into the new school year:

- In the commotion of [changing schedules](#), avoid the double dose dilemma and morning medication mix-up:
 - Carefully read and follow directions and warnings on all labels before taking or giving your child medicine
 - Teach your children never take other people's prescription drugs
 - Never give your child prescription medication unless it has been prescribed for them specifically by a doctor.
- Dispose of silica gel packets included in new purchases, as they present a choking hazard
- Teach children to be careful and use caution in classes like Chemistry, where potentially harmful substances may be used

For more information on safety at school and in the home, please visit the [IPC Resource Library](#).

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year including holidays. If you have a question, or if someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222.

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The **Illinois Poison Center** is a non-profit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained doctors, nurses and pharmacists.