



## For Immediate Release

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### **Warmer Weather Equals More Calls to the Poison Center**

*Illinois Poison Center calls increase 20 percent during summer months*

July 11, 2012 (Chicago) - While there are many year-round hazards that result in calls to the Illinois Poison Center, the summer presents a unique array of potential exposure opportunities as people spend more time outdoors. During the summer season, calls to the Illinois Poison Center traditionally increase up to twenty percent.

“There are many factors that can explain this increase in calls: warmer temperatures, summer vacations, and families spending more time outside,” says Dr. Michael Wahl, Medical Director of the Illinois Poison Center. “It is important that individuals are extremely diligent during this time of year to ensure they remain safe and free from poison exposures.”

As the temperature outside continues to rise, it is critical that families are aware of the potential hazards the summer may bring. According to the experts at the Illinois Poison Center, there are five substances that elicit an increase in calls during this season:

- **Sunscreen:** Most sunscreen exposures occur when a child accidentally swallows the substance or licks their hands after it’s been applied. Although sunscreen is minimally toxic, only adults should apply sunscreen to children. Be sure to keep containers sealed and out of the reach and sight of children.
- **Insect Repellents:** A common type of insect repellent is DEET. It comes in various formulations: aerosol sprays, pump sprays, sticks, creams and lotions. When used properly, DEET products are safe and effective in preventing bug bites. However, there are case reports of serious toxicity including vomiting, fever, coma and seizures following chronic over-application or large acute ingestions of DEET products.
- **Pool Chemicals:** The most common pool chemicals involved in accidental poisoning are those that contain chlorine. Chlorine fumes are a significant respiratory irritant. Always take caution when using these chemicals: open and use them in a well-ventilated area, wear eye and skin protection, and never sniff a chemical to see how potent it is or mix chemicals unless specifically directed by product labels.

- **Plants:** Most leaves or berries (indoor and outdoor) are not significantly toxic if ingested. However, there are a few plants that can pose a serious risk if eaten by small children. Examples include:
  - Yew berries (irregular heart rhythms, seizures)
  - Foxglove or lily of the valley (irregular heart rhythms, slowing of the heart)
  - Pokeweed (vomiting, diarrhea, headache)
- **Bites and Stings:** Most insect or spider bites result in minor local effects, but some (such as black widow and brown recluse spiders) can cause potentially serious injuries. Non-venomous snakebites are a nuisance, but venomous snake bites (such as massasauga and copperhead) can cause serious symptoms and often require hospital admission and an anti-venom treatment.

If you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance (i.e. medication, household cleaners, beauty/automotive products, etc.), please call the Illinois Poison Center immediately at 1-800-222-1222. Experts are available 24 hours a day. For more information visit [www.illinoispoisoncenter.org](http://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org)

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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 hotline staffed by specially trained doctors, nurses and pharmacists.*

*The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council.*