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IPC Warns of Summer Hazards over Memorial Day Weekend
Calls to the IPC Spike in the Summer Months

For many families, especially those with young children, Memorial Day kicks off long summer days, beach and pool outings, and frequent outdoor celebrations. However, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) warns that this fun time of year can make Illinoisans more vulnerable to accidental poisoning exposures: The IPC sees a 10 to 20% increase in call volume every summer compared to the rest of the year.

“During the summer months, the risk of poisoning increases, along with unsafe handling of food, insect bites, and exposure to chemicals used in everything from grilling to swimming pools,” says Michael Wahl, MD, Medical Director, IPC. “But poisonings are preventable. When the necessary safety precautions are taken, we can all enjoy the season and stay in good health.”

As the nation’s oldest poison center, the IPC has plenty of tips to help Illinois residents enjoy summer safely, wherever they and their families choose to spend it.

At the picnic table:

- If grilling, pack extra clean plates to avoid cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods;
- Cook food as close to serving time as possible to avoid bacterial growth;
- Refrigerate food within two hours of cooking—if you are unsure how long an item has been out, play it safe and throw it away; and
- Keep coolers in the shade and out of the hot car or trunk.

In the garage:

- Keep children away from products like hydrocarbons (charcoal lighter fluid, gasoline, kerosene, turpentine and paint thinner, tiki torch oil and other similar products), which can cause severe lung damage and death if inhaled into the lungs;
- Be careful when using oven cleaners, grill cleaners, drain cleaners, brick/concrete cleaners and rust removing solutions, which contain substances that can cause chemical burns; and

- Keep products in their original containers, especially products like windshield washer fluid, gasoline additives, radiator antifreeze and brake fluid, which can contain methanol, ethylene glycol and diethylene glycols that can cause blindness, renal failure, kidney failure or even death if ingested by children.

At the pool:

- Because chlorine fumes are a significant respiratory irritant, open and use all pool chemicals in a very well-ventilated area, and 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.

Outdoors:

- Wear clothing that will cover as much exposed skin as possible in order to protect from insect bites and stings, and plant poisonings, like poison ivy;
- Teach children not to touch or put mushrooms, berries or any part of a plant in their mouths;
- Sunscreen and bug repellants are crucial summertime staples, but they may contain chemicals that can be harmful, so read all labels and apply according to the directions; and
- Wash hands immediately after applying sunscreen and bug repellants.

[Click here](#) for more summertime safety tips and resources from the IPC.

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 1-800-222-1222. For more information, visit the IPC's website: <http://illinoispoisoncenter.org>.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit 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 physicians, nurses and pharmacists.