Moral of the Story/Call

The following examples are REAL calls received by the Illinois Poison Center. These types of poison exposures can happen to anyone regardless of ethnicity, education level, socio-economic level or location. Feel free to integrate these examples and prevention tips (morals) into your poison prevention education presentations and activities.

Calls Involving Children

Caller (parent): Reported that their child had ingested nail polish. The parent panicked and gave the child nail polish remover as an antidote.
Moral of the story/call: Do not panic or give a child/person anything to eat or drink. Immediately call the Poison Center at 1.800.222.1222 for treatment advice. 90% of poisonings/poison exposure calls involving a child under age 6 are minimally toxic and can be treated with basic first aid treatment advice from the Poison Center staff thus preventing an unnecessary and costly visit to the Emergency Department.

Caller (mother): Reported that, to make it easier for her daughter to take her medication, she cut her child’s medication (tablets) in half and stored them in the original medicine bottle. The father thought the small pieces of medicine were just “crumbles”, and gave the child “a pinch” of the half-tablets. As a result, the child received about 12 times the recommended dosage.
Moral of the story/call: Caregivers should clearly communicate with each other as to who’s responsible for giving medication to children/pets/others and the proper dosage. Recommendation: create a check list and attach to the medicine bottle to help document when the medication was given (date/time/dosage) and by whom.

Caller (Emergency Department doctor): Reported that a child had been brought to ED due to respiratory distress after drinking lamp oil. The parents had stored the lamp oil in a Pedialyte bottle and placed the bottle beside the fridge. The older sibling had filled the younger child’s sippy cup with the lamp oil thinking it was apple juice.
Moral of the story/call: Always keep chemicals in their original containers with the original label(s) and store high, out of sight and reach of children/pets. Never store chemicals where food items are kept.

Calls Involving Teens

Caller (teen): Reported getting oil paint in his eye and wanted to use turpentine to get it out.
Moral of the story/call: With poisons in the eye, immediately flush the eye with tepid/lukewarm tap water (plain water) for 15 minutes then call the Poison Center at 1.800.222.1222. Do not use any other chemicals/substances to flush the eye because they could cause damage/more damage to the eye.

Caller (teen): A teenage boy reported that he ate food off a plate that had acetone (remover) on it. The boy waited 2 hours to call the Poison Center because he didn’t want to use his regular cell phone minutes but rather wait and use his free “night/weekend” minutes.
Moral of the story/call: Call the Poison Center immediately if you suspect you or someone else has been exposed to something that might be toxic/harmful. Patient outcomes can be improved and medical problems minimized if treatment/advice is administered as soon as possible. Waiting to call the Poison Center could result in having to be hospitalized; or even worse, death.
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**Calls Involving Adults**

**Caller (female):** Reported taking sips “natural, non-toxic” cleaning products as part of the demonstrations she did to prove that the cleaners she sold were “non-toxic”. After ingesting many “sips”, which amounted to several bottles of cleaner over a two-week period, she started to experience abdominal pain.

*Moral of the story/call:* ANYTHING can be toxic (even water). Toxicity depends on the dosage/amount and the person. The term “natural” does not mean that the substance can’t be toxic. The term “non-toxic” is a misnomer since anything can be toxic depending on the dosage.

To read about a water toxicity case go to: [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16614865/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16614865/)

**Caller (older adult/senior):** Reported that she didn’t understand how to use her prescription duragesic (narcotic) patch so she cut the patch open and spread the gel contents on her legs.

*Moral of the story/call:* Use medication only as directed. Make sure to talk to your doctor or pharmacists if you have questions. Read the instructions completely before taking any medication. Always make sure to wear your glasses/contacts if necessary and turn on a light when reading instructions and taking medication. Some medication, like patches, are “slow-release” and can be toxic if released/ingested/used all at once.

**Caller (male):** Reported using auto wheel brightener chemical instead of vinegar on a dinner salad because the containers looked alike. Before realizing his mistake, he served the salad to his family.

*Moral of the story/call:* Store all non-food/beverage items (cleaners, automotive products, vitamins, beauty/ health care products, etc.) away from/outside of the kitchen, cooking and eating areas and out of reach and sight of children/pets.

**Caller (senior male):** Reported that he couldn’t remember if he had taken his blood pressure medication that day so he took it anyhow and had been feeling dizzy ever since.

*Moral of the story/call:* If you have multiple medications, make sure to use a pill dispenser to organize the pills to be taken each day of the week. Because pill dispensers are not child-proof/resistant, make sure to store the container out of sight and reach of children.

**Caller (nursing home nurse):** Reported that an Alzheimer’s patient was found with an empty bottle of hand lotion. The caller and family members weren’t sure if the patient actually ingested any of the product or if the bottle was empty to begin with.

*Moral of the story/call:* Developmentally disabled, confused and/or people with Alzheimer’s/dementia do not have the ability to stop eating/drinking things that may taste bad and thus may consume levels/amounts that could be toxic. Most people who, when they eat/drink something that doesn’t taste good, usually stop at a small amount (less toxic amount). Store and/or lock chemicals/products up high and out of sight and reach (cleaning products, vitamins, supplements, beauty/health care products, automotive products, etc.).