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, socioeconomic level or location. Feel free to integrate these examples and prevention tips (morals) into your poison prevention education presentation tools and activities.

Calls Involving Children

Caller (grandfather): Reported that he mixed rat poison with peanut butter and then spread the peanut butter jar w/rat poison on crackers to “bait” the rats. He then proceeded to distribute some of the crackers to one area of the house leaving a few on the kitchen counter to be placed in a different area of the house when he returned. While the grandfather distributed the first batch of crackers, his grandson wandered into the kitchen and ate poisonous crackers.

**Moral of the story/call:** Never mix poisons/potentially toxic substances with food/beverages.

Caller (pregnant female): Reported that her carbon monoxide (CO) detector went off. She didn’t know if she needed to go to the emergency department since she didn’t feel sick (headaches, nausea, dizziness, etc.).

**Moral of the story/call:** Carbon Monoxide is more concentrated in an unborn fetus which is why it is extremely important that a pregnant female exposed to CO immediately seek medical attention.

Caller (father): Reported that, on a hectic Monday morning, both parents unknowingly gave their child his morning asthma medication resulting in a double, potentially dangerous dose.

**Moral of the story/call:** Caregivers should clearly communicate with each other as to who’s responsible for giving medication to children/pets/others. Recommendation: create a checklist and attach to the medicine bottle to help document when the medication was given (date/time/dose) and by whom.

Calls Involving Teens

Caller (mother): Reported that her teenage daughter had a fight with her boyfriend and took a “bunch of aspirin”. When asked by the IPC professional the strength of the aspirin, the caller replied “Oh, whatever strength Tylenol comes in normally. It was aspirin, you know, Tylenol. The over the counter ibuprofen stuff.”

**Moral of the story/call:** Most people don’t know that there’s a difference between aspirin and Tylenol (acetomenophin) which requires different treatments if taken over consumed. If possible, have the bottle/container with you if you call the poison center so that the IPC professionals can give you the correct treatment recommendation(s).

Calls Involving Adults

Caller (female): Reported that her car was leaking some type of fluid so she tasted it to find out what it was. She heard that antifreeze had a sweet taste so she figured she could rule out antifreeze if it didn’t have a similar taste.

**Moral of the story/call:** NEVER taste/ingest something if you don’t know what it is. Even a small amount of antifreeze can be extremely dangerous. If you have questions about an unknown substance, call the Illinois Poison Center or take a small sample to the appropriate expert for identification (in this case, a local mechanic).

Caller (caregiver): Reported that their grandmother, who’s been battling dementia, had eaten at least 5-10 cigarettes from a pack that was left on the counter.

**Moral of the story/call:** Developmentally/mentally disabled and/or confused people do not have the ability to stop ingesting things that may taste bad and as a result they may consume amounts that could be toxic. Store and lock things up high and out of sight and reach of persons with developmental disabilities (cleaning products, vitamins, supplements, beauty/health care products, automotive products, tobacco products, etc.).