## POISON SMART UTAH

A quarterly publication of the Utah Poison Control Center.

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# National Poison Prevention Week is March 19 - 25, 2000.

In 1961, President Kennedy designated the third week in March as National Poison Prevention Week by signing an act of congress into law. The primary purpose of National Poison Prevention Week is to raise public awareness of the problem of unintentional poisonings in children under six years of age.

Poisonings continue to be a major cause of unintentional injuries in Children. In 1999, there were over 41,000 reports of unintentional poisoning in Utah, 58% of these cases involved children <6 years of age.

"Children Act Fast So Do Poisons" is the general theme for Poison Prevention Week. We hope this will remind parents to keep household chemicals and medicines stored away from children at all times. Please join the Utah Poison Control Center in celebrating this important week by promoting awareness of poison prevention and by following poison prevention recommendations. Please call the Utah Poison Control Center at 581-7504 if you have any questions, need further information, or would like help planning poison prevention activities in your community.


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# POISON SMART UTAH

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Spring 2000 Emergency 801-581-2151 or 1-800-456-7707, Administrative 801-581-7504

# Reduce Your Child's Risk of a Pesticide Poison Exposure

## Careful Planing Can Decrease Your Need for Chemical Pesticides

Plants, insects, mold, mildew, rodents, bacteria, and other organisms are a natural part of the environment. They benefit people in many ways but sometimes are considered pests and can be hazardous to you and your family.[1] Pesticides are designed to kill insects, weeds, and fungi, but many are toxic to the environment and to people, especially children. Too much exposure to pesticides can cause a wide range of health problems in children. You can reduce the need for pesticide use in and around your home by using alternate methods of pest control.

In 1998, the American Association of Poison Control Centers received over 46,000 reports of pesticide poison exposures to children less than 6 years of age. In 1999, the Utah Poison Control Center received 818 pesticide poison exposure calls for children under 6 years of age. Of these, the most common calls were exposures to rodenticides and insecticides.

Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, and fungicides. Herbicides are used to control weeds on lawns and other unwanted areas. Rodenticides are used to control rodents such as rats or mice. Fungicides are used to control fungi such as rust, mildew, blights, and molds. Household products account for a major portion of pesticides sold. Cleansers, bleaches, toilet bowl cleaners, disinfectants, mildew removers, and ant and roach sprays are all pesticides.

## Helpful Pest Control and Safety Tips for Your Family

Parents can help to protect their children from pesticide poison exposure by developing a pest management plan, and by following safety tips recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The most effective way to control pests and to limit your children's exposure to potentially harmful chemicals is to develop a plan that combines several pest management methods.

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The following steps are recommended by the EPA to develop a pest management plan:

**1) Identify the pest problem.** This is the most important step in pest control.

Some pests are easy to identify; however, other signs that may make you think “pest” can be misleading. For example, what may look like a plant “disease” may be in fact, a sign of poor soil or lack of water.

**2) Decide how much pest control is necessary.** Pest control is not the same as pest elimination. Ask yourself these questions:

- Does your yard really need to be totally weed free?
- Recognizing that some insects are beneficial to your lawn, do you need to get rid of all of them?
- Can you tolerate some blemished fruits and vegetables from your garden?
- Is anyone in your home known to be particularly sensitive to chemicals?

**3) Choose an effective option.** The most effective way to reduce risks posed by pesticides is to use non-chemical control methods to reduce or eliminate pest problems. These methods include preventing pests, using non-chemical pest controls such as adding beneficial bugs to your yard, and using manual methods.

**• Preventing pests**

Around the home, such measures include removing sources of food and water (such as leaky pipes) and destroying pest shelters and breeding sites (such as trash and plant debris).

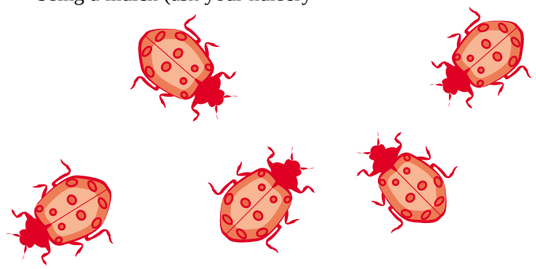
**• Using non-chemical pest controls**

**Beneficial bugs**

Ladybug beetles and their larvae eat aphids, mealybugs, whiteflies, and mites. Other beneficial bugs include spiders, centipedes, ground beetles, lacewings, dragonflies, big-eyed bugs, and ants.

**• Manual methods**

-Spading and hoeing to cut up weeds.
-Hand-picking weeds from your lawn and pests from your plants, indoors or out.
-Using a fly swatter.
-Setting traps to control rats, mice, and some insects.
-Using a mulch (ask your nursery for recommended types) to reduce weed growth.



**• Using chemical pest controls**

If you decide that the best solution to your pest problem is chemical – by itself or, preferably, combined with non-chemical treatments – be aware that one of the greatest causes of pesticide exposure to humans is the use of pesticides in and around the home. **It is extremely important for parents to take responsibility for making sure these products are used properly.**

**• Evaluate the results**

Compare pre-treatment and post-treatment conditions. Is there evidence of a clear reduction in the number of pests? Weigh the benefits of short-term chemical pesticide control against the benefits of long-term control using a variety of other treatments, including non-chemical methods. It is easier to prevent pests than to control them. You may not need to worry about the four pest control steps just mentioned if you make the effort to prevent pests in the first place.

# Pet Corner

## Pet Pesticide Exposure Prevention Tips

Be careful when using mouse, snail, or slug baits, and ant or roach traps. Most baits contain ingredients that can attract your pets. Always place and store these products in areas that are out of reach of your pets. Call the Utah Poison Control Center immediately if your pet ingests any bait product.

- Keep pets out of areas where insecticides and herbicides have been applied for the recommended time indicated on the label.
- Always store pesticides in a secured area where pets may not reach them.
- Consult your veterinarian before buying or using a flea product, especially when treating a sick, debilitated, or pregnant pet.[2]
- The Utah Poison Control Center is a 24-hour emergency service for poison emergencies and information. Our Specialists in Poison Information will be happy to assist you with any poison-related questions you may have concerning your pets.





## What You Should Do If a Pesticide Poisoning Occurs

If the person is unconscious, having trouble breathing, or having convulsions, call 911.
Otherwise, call the Poison Control Center immediately.
Be ready to tell the Specialist in Poison Information:

- the exact name of the product
- the amount taken
- when the poisoning happened
- the age and weight of the poisoned person
- how the person is doing

**Warning: Do not follow the first-aid recommendations on containers they may be incorrect or out of date.**

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1. United States Environmental Protection Agency. (1995). Citizen’s guide to pest control and pesticide safety. Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances (7501C). EPA730-K-95-001.

2. ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center.

# MYTH VS. FACT

### SILICA GEL
### Small Package...Strong Warnings

Silica gel is a desiccant which absorbs moisture and is included in the packaging of many products such as shoes, purses, medications, electronic equipment, computers, etc. Desiccants are the most common foreign object ingestion by children under 6 years of age reported to the Utah Poison Control Center, with 584 reports in 1999.

Silica gel packets are printed with very strong words of caution – DO NOT EAT, HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED, THROW AWAY. Parents may panic after reading the silica gel caution label, if their child puts the package in their mouth or eats the product. Rest assured the contents of the packet, silica gel, is basically sand and it is not harmful if swallowed. However, caution should be taken to keep the product out of small children's reach, because the silica gel packet may be a choking hazard.

Please call the Utah Poison Control Center if your child ingests a silica gel packet.

## Pesticide Safety Tips from the EPA

- Always store pesticides and other household chemicals, including bleach, out of children’s reach - preferably in a locked cabinet.
- If you decide you must use pesticides, always read the label first and follow the directions to the letter, including all precautions and restrictions. Even if you have used it before read the label again - don’t trust your memory.
- Always read directions carefully because pesticide products, household cleaning products and pet products can be “dangerous” or ineffective if too much or too little is used.
- Before applying a pesticide (indoors or outdoors), remove children, their toys, and pets from the area and keep them away until the pesticide has dried or as recommended by the label.
- If your use of pesticides or other household chemicals is interrupted (perhaps by a phone call), properly reclose the container and remove it from children’s reach. Always store pesticides in the original child-resistant packaging.
- Never transfer pesticides to other containers that children may associate with food or drink (like soda bottles).
- When you use cups, teaspoons, or tablespoons to measure pesticides, use only level measures of level spoonfuls. NEVER use the same tools that you use for measuring pesticides - spoons, cups, bottles - to prepare food, even if you have washed them.
- When applying insect repellents to children, read all directions first. Do not apply over cuts, wounds or irritated skin; do not apply to eyes, mouth, hands or directly on the face; and use just enough to cover exposed skin or clothing, but do not use under clothing.
- Always store pesticides away from children’s reach, in a locked cabinet or garden shed. Child-proof safety latches also may be installed on cabinets and can be purchased at local hardware stores and other retail outlets.
- Never place rodent or insect baits where small children can get to them.
- Alert others to the potential hazard of pesticides especially care givers and grandparents.
- Check the container to ensure that the product bears an EPA approved label and registration number. Never use a product that has not been approved for use by the EPA.