



Maine Farm Safety Program

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Symptoms and First Aid for Poisonings

All poisonings are serious. Some poisonings require immediate attention before calling for help. Check labels for first aid information, and follow it immediately. Speed is crucial. Then contact your local Poison Control Center, physician, or emergency personnel.

Tell-Tale Signs of Poisonings

Things to watch for in a suspected poisoning include:

- ✓ Unusual stains or odors on clothes or skin.
- ✓ Unusual odor on breath.
- ✓ Drowsiness, stomach pain, vomiting, sweating, drooling, irritability, signs of fear, or other sudden changes in behavior.
- ✓ Drug or chemical containers that are open and/or out of place.

Poisoning Symptoms

Each chemical family attacks the human body in a different way. General poisoning symptoms include the following.

Mild Poisoning

Headache, fatigue, weakness, dizziness, restlessness, perspiration, nausea, diarrhea, loss of appetite, loss of weight, thirst, moodiness, soreness in joints, skin irritation, eye irritation.

Symptoms and First Aid for Poisonings

- **In the event of a poisoning, look for the container and contact professional help.**
- **Make an attempt to wash off the poison from the affected area.**

Moderate Poisoning

Severe nausea, severe diarrhea, excessive saliva, stomach cramps, excessive perspiration, trembling, no muscle coordination and muscle twitches, extreme weakness, mental confusion, blurred vision, difficulty in breathing, cough, rapid pulse, flushed or yellow skin, weepy eyes.

Severe Poisonings

Fever, intense thirst, increased rate of breathing, uncontrollable muscle twitches, pinpoint pupils, convulsions, inability to breathe, unconsciousness.

Before calling for help, treat the following situations as suggested.

Poisons in the Eye

Eye membranes absorb chemicals quickly. This can lead to eye damage within minutes. Flood the eye with lukewarm (never hot) water poured from a large glass two or three inches from the eye. Continue for 15 minutes. Blink the eye as much as possible during the flooding. Do not force the eyelid open and do not allow the eyes to be rubbed.

If lukewarm water is not available, rinse the eye quickly using a gentle stream from a hose for at least 15 minutes.

Poisons on the Skin

If poisons come in contact with the skin, they must be removed as quickly as possible. Remove contaminated clothing

and flood the skin area with water for 10 minutes. Then gently wash the skin area with soap and water and rinse. Later, destroy contaminated clothing.

For a chemical skin burn, rinse the area with lots of water, remove the clothes and cover with a soft, clean cloth. Do not apply grease or ointments.

Inhaled Poisons

Inhaled poisons are very serious because of the damage that can be done to the lungs and other tissues of the body. Minimize your risk of exposure, and immediately get the person to fresh air. Loosen the victim's clothing. Send someone for help as quickly as possible. If the victim is not breathing, start artificial respiration and continue it until the victim is breathing or help arrives. Open the doors and windows so no one else will be poisoned by the fumes.

Swallowed Poisons

Many different poisons can be swallowed. Look into the victim's mouth and remove all tablets, powder, or any material that may be present. Examine the mouth for cuts, burns, swelling, unusual coloring or odor. Rinse and wipe out the mouth with a cloth. If the person is awake and able to swallow, give one-half glassful of water.

How to Induce Vomiting

The most important item to have in your home when poisoning occurs is Ipecac syrup, but never use it without the advice of the Poison Control Center



Calling for Help

Call the New England Poison Control Center at **1-800-222-1222** or your physician. Identify yourself and give your relationship to the patient. Give your telephone phone number; describe the patient by name, age, and sex. If possible, have the container or poison in your hand and identify it as best you can. If possible, explain what was taken, when and how much. Describe how the patient is acting. Be prepared to answer any additional questions asked. Follow the advice given by the Poison Control Center or physician.



- **Identify yourself.**
- **Describe the patient by name, age and sex.**
- **Have the container or poison in your hand.**
- **Explain how poison was taken.**

or a physician. Ipecac is a plant extract that induces vomiting when swallowed. Vomiting is one way to remove the poison from the stomach, but your physician or the Poison control Center may not always recommend using Ipecac syrup. Do not use Ipecac without the advice of a physician or the Poison Control Center. Remember, never induce vomiting unless instructed to do so. This is especially important if the patient has swallowed petroleum products such as gasoline, cleaning fluids or lighter fluids. Never induce vomiting if the patient is drowsy or unconscious, is having convulsions, or has swallowed a strong corrosive such as drain cleaners, electric dishwasher detergent or acids. In this last case, give liquids only. Antidotes recommended on many product labels may be outdated or incorrect so never rely on them. In addition, salt water, mustard water, and many other home remedies are ineffective and may be dangerous. Do not use them. Always consult a physician or the Poison Control Center before inducing vomiting.

Ipecac Syrup

When instructed to use Ipecac Syrup by a physician or Poison Control Center, here are some things to remember. Before inducing vomiting, have a plastic bag handy. Bring the poison and its container to the hospital. Also, bring any stomach contents you collect. Give one tablespoon (15cc) to young children 1 to 6 years of age, and two tablespoons (30cc) to older children and adults. Follow the Ipecac Syrup with one cup of a noncarbonated beverage like water or juice. Encourage the patient to drink more fluids, if necessary. Do not allow the patient to lie down. Keep him or her active. Motion helps to cause vomiting, which will usually occur in less than 15 minutes. If the patient has not vomited within 15 to 20 minutes, give a second dose of Ipecac Syrup and more liquid.



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This Maine Farm Safety fact sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.

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