

For any information regarding the Georgia Poison Center please contact us at:

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1.800.222.1222 poison emergencies

www.georgiapoisoncenter.org



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SUMMER EXPOSURES

Summer Safety

School is out and families are enjoying the outdoors. Summer is most people's favorite time of the year due to the warm weather but it is important to remember children are at a greater risk of poisoning. Our yards contain chemicals, critters, and plants and our homes contain household cleaning products and medicines that are within reach of others, mostly children who do not know better.

Poison centers across the country answer more calls during the summer compared to the winter months.

The top inquiries for poison centers during this time are as follows:

- Food Poisoning
- Insect Bites
- Snake Bites
- Spider Bites
- Insect sprays or lotion
- Plants
- Alcoholic drinks and products

The Doctor's Corner



Gayford P. Lopez, PharmD, DABAT

Poisoning is a preventable injury, yet each year thousands of children are treated in the emergency departments due to unintentional poisonings. A significant decrease in deaths have occurred due to child resistance packaging, safety messaging, and education efforts but we are still aiming to reduce unintentional poisonings even further. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends keeping medicines and household chemicals in their original, child-resistant containers, store potentially hazardous substances up and out of a child's sight and reach, and keep the national Poison Help hotline number, 1-800-222-1222, handy in case of a poison emergency.



A Day At The Call Center....

As spring turns into summer each year, the Georgia Poison Center is called about a large number of snake bites. The vast majority of these are for crotalids - rattlesnakes, copperheads, and cottonmouths. On rare occasions however, we are consulted on Georgia's only elapid: the coral snake. This red, black, and yellow creature doesn't have the two large hollow fangs expected of crotalids. Instead, it has a row of small sharp teeth used to latch onto it's victim. The bite doesn't cause redness and swelling typical of a crotalid either - instead, it can cause muscle weakness and even paralysis.

The GPC was recently consulted about a patient receiving a coral snake bite near Brunswick, GA. Unfortunately, coral snake antivenin has not been manufactured since 2003 following the closure of the plant that produced it. The hospital treating the patient didn't have any in stock. A hospital in nearby Florida with a stock of antivenin was located, and with the help of the GPC the antivenin was quickly delivered. The patient was treated successfully and released from the hospital the following day.



Coral Snake



Black Widow Spider

SNAKES

With 43 species, snakes can be found in urban and suburban areas of Georgia. Venomous snakes that can be found include rattlesnakes, copperheads, cottonmouths/water moccasins, and coral snakes. These snakes pose little threat to humans as long as they are left alone.

According to the GA Dept. of Natural Resources, out of 10,000 snakebites in the U.S. per year, only 12-15 result in death. Therefore, your chance of survival is 499 out of 500.

In Case of a Snakebite:

Regardless if the snake is venomous or non-venomous treatment is necessary and you should follow the Do's and Don'ts listed below.

The Do's:

1. Try to stay calm
2. Keep the bitten body part below heart level and remove rings, watches, and tight clothing.
3. Try to identify the snake if you can do so easily without putting yourself at risk or wasting valuable time.
4. Get to the nearest hospital or emergency medical facility.

The Don'ts:

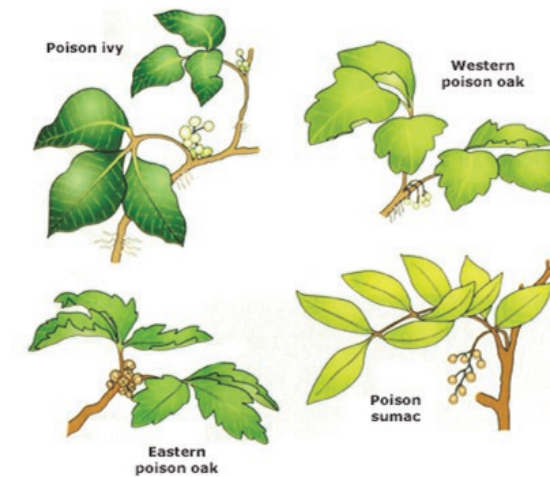
1. Do not eat or drink anything, including alcoholic beverages or medicine.
2. Do not run or engage in strenuous physical activity.
3. Do not cut into or incise bite marks with a blade.
4. Do not apply a constrictive tourniquet.
5. Do not use a stun gun or other electrical shock.
6. Do not freeze or apply extreme cold to the area of the bite.

The universal treatment for a serious snakebite is the use of antivenin or snakebite serum, which should only be administered by a medical doctor. If local doctors aren't sure when to administer antivenin, advise them to contact the Georgia Poison Center (1-800-222-1222).

Myths:

- Do snakes chase people? - NO A snake chasing someone has nothing to gain. They are not vengeful and do not chase people out of sheer hate.
- Do rattlesnakes add one rattle a year? - NO A rattlesnake will add one rattle every time it sheds its skin. Snakes may shed several times in the course of a year, each time adding a new rattle. Rattles may also break off.
- Must a snake coil before it can strike? - NO Snakes can bite or strike from any position. However, coiling does increase the distance that a snake can strike.

PLANTS, SNAKES, & SPIDERS OH MY!



POISONOUS PLANTS

Both indoor and outdoor plants can be poisonous causing symptoms such as upset stomach or skin rash. Some may cause harm to your heart, kidneys, and other organs. Even though some plants are considered non-poisonous, it can still cause an upset stomach if eaten.

Poison Ivy, Oak & Sumac

A rash, burning, and itching sensation may occur within a few hours to two days and can take up to two weeks to go away if you come in contact with the sap from poison ivy, oak, and sumac.

If you touch poison ivy, oak, or sumac...

1. Wash the area with warm, soapy water right away.
2. Wash any clothing and garden tools you think may have sap on it.
3. Try not to scratch your rash as that can cause it to worsen.

Things to remember:

1. You can only get a rash from touching the sap; you cannot get the rash from touching another person's rash.
2. Try to avoid touching these plants. Wear long pants, long sleeves and gloves when working in the yard.
3. Stay on the trails while hiking or camping.
4. Do not burn poison ivy, oak, or sumac. The smoke can cause breathing problems.

Poison Ivy: has shiny green leaves that grown in groups of three. It may also grow as a vine or as a low shrub.

Poison Oak: has leaves grouped in three. It grows as a low shrub, which may have clusters of green and white berries.

Poison Sumac: has 7-13 leaves found in pairs with a single leaf at the end. These long, smooth leaves are bright orange and velvet-like in the spring. They become dark green and glossy on top and light green underneath. It grows as a tree in swampy areas.

SPIDERS

The black widow and the brown recluse are the only two spiders that are dangerous to man, rarely causing death if bitten by one.

Black Widow: The female is a black, shiny spider with a red or orange "hour glass" shape on her stomach. The smaller, brown male spider is not poisonous. You can find the black widow in dark, quiet places—under rocks, debris and woodpiles, as well as attics, cellars, and damp storage areas. The bite of a black widow may be painful and within one hour after being bit, you may experience stomach pain, dizziness, stiffness, and have trouble breathing.

Brown Recluse: This spider is yellowish-tan to dark brown with a "violin shape" marking on its head and about the size of a quarter. You can find the brown recluse in dark, quiet places. The bite may be very painful and within 36 hours after being bit, you may experience restlessness, fever, chills, nausea, weakness, and joint pain. A "bull's-eye" like blister or wound may develop at the bite site.

First Aid

- Wash the bite site with soapy water.
- Call the Georgia Poison Center right away for more treatment advice.

Safety Tips

- Before dressing, shake out clothing, shoes and hats.
- Wear shoes and gloves when getting fire wood, lumber, and other items that have been stored for a long time.
- Dust and vacuum around windows, corners, under furniture, and storage areas.