



## Care Partner Information

### *Tips for Providing Older Adult Care*

## Poison and Drug Information Center

A poison can be any substance that is harmful to your body. Any prescription, over-the-counter medicine, or herbal treatments can be a poison. In fact, almost anything taken the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person can be poisonous. The Arizona Poison and Drug information Center is a free call center that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

The Poison Center is staffed by highly trained poison experts. Staff can be pharmacists, doctors, nurses, or other trained specialists. When you call, they can give you free, fast advice right when you need it. Any question is a good question. Your calls are confidential. Help is available in several languages and there are services for the hard of hearing.

If you think someone has been poisoned, don't wait for symptoms - call **1-800-222-1222** anywhere in the United States. If you aren't sure - call anyway! Save this number in your cell phone and write it near home phones.

**BUT**, if a person has stopped breathing, has collapsed, or has a seizure - call 911 right away.

### **Medicine and Older Adults**

Many of us know to call the Poison Center if we worry that a child has been accidentally poisoned. It is important to know that older adults are also at high risk for harm from medicines, and the Poison Center is there for you.

Why are older adults at high risk? Lots of reasons.

They take more prescription medicines than any other age group. This sets the stage for each drug to interact with the other drugs in the body, and may cause harm. For example, a drug prescribed to help with one problem, such as pain, can interact with another drug taken for a chronic condition, such as high blood pressure, and cause harm. With age, drugs work differently in older adults than in younger adults. Often the lowest doses are best. Some drugs shouldn't be used at all in older adults.

A good rule is that after an older adult turns 65, they shouldn't take any medicine (prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal) unless they talk to their doctor first.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at [www.aging.arizona.edu](http://www.aging.arizona.edu)

### What To Expect When You Call The Poison Call Center

Remember, your calls are confidential and any question is a GOOD question.

You will be asked:

- What happened and when did it happen?
- What was the poison?
- How much of the poison was involved?
- What is the person's age?
- What is the person's weight?
- Does the person have any other health conditions?
- How is the person feeling now?

### Common Things That Could Be Poisonous

- Medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, herbal)
- Cosmetics, essential oils, shampoo, bleach, bug or weed killers, antifreeze
- Chemicals you use at work
- Bug bites and stings
- Mushrooms and plants
- Fumes and gases

### Ways To Prevent Poisonings

- Keep medicines and household products in their original containers
- Read the labels on all medicines and household products and follow the directions very carefully
- Throw out medicines or household products that have expired or you don't use anymore
- Buy child-resistant packaging - but remember it is still possible for children to open these items - so store medicines and household products UP, AWAY and OUT OF SIGHT
- Have a working carbon monoxide detector in your home



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