



How to Treat Poisoning

Three Methods: [When the Poison Was Swallowed](#) [When the Poison Was Inhaled](#) [When the Poison Came into Contact With the Skin or Eyes](#)

Poisoning by way of household substances, toxic berries, dangerous fumes, and other sources leads to thousands of hospitalizations every year. Knowing how to handle the situation quickly and effectively can mean the difference between survival or death. Read this article so you'll know just what to do in case you have to help someone who has been poisoned.

Method
1

When the Poison Was Swallowed

1 Call emergency services or a poison control hotline immediately. Swallowing a poison can lead to serious complications that can't be addressed without medical intervention. If you suspect someone has swallowed a poison, get help right away. Try to determine what caused the poisoning and have the person's age and weight ready to give to the person who answers the phone.

- Look for pills, plants or berries (berries), mouth burns, etc. Knowing the source of the poison is essential for treatment purposes.
- If the person is unconscious or otherwise exhibiting severe symptoms, skip the call to poison control and seek medical help right away. ^[1]
- If you're not sure what the person swallowed, seek immediate medical help, no matter what the symptoms are.
- If the person has just swallowed the poisonous substance, and you're not sure whether or not it will become a serious issue, call poison control at 800-222-1222 (in the United States).^[2] Poison control is a hotline staffed with attendants who can tell you what measures to take to help the person who has been poisoned, and whether you'll need to go to the hospital.

2 Clear the person's airway. If the person swallowed a household product, pills, or another substance, it's important to make sure none remains in the mouth or air passage. Wrap a clean towel around your hand. Open the person's mouth and remove traces of the substance using the towel.^[3]

- If the person vomits, continue monitoring the airway and keeping the mouth area clean.
- If you're not sure what the person swallowed, keep the soiled towel to bring with you to the hospital for testing.

3 Check the person's breathing and pulse. Determine whether the person is breathing, check his or her airway, and determine if he or she has a pulse. If you don't feel breath or a pulse, [administer CPR immediately](#).

- If the person is a child, administer [do child CPR](#).
- For babies, administer [infant or toddler CPR](#).

4 Keep the person comfortable. Poison in the system can lead to seizures, so it's important to take measures to prevent injuries from occurring. Have the person lie down on his or her side on a comfortable surface, and place a pillow under his or her head to cushion it. Loosen belts and other tight clothing. Remove jewelry and other constrictive items.

- Make sure the person doesn't lie down on his or her back; if vomiting occurs, this could lead to choking.
- Continue monitoring the person's breathing and pulse, performing CPR as necessary, until medical help arrives.

Method
2

When the Poison Was Inhaled

1 Call for emergency help. Poisoning by inhalation can lead to serious medical issues, and it's important to get

emergency medical professionals involved. Inhalation could also affect others nearby, so don't try to handle the situation by yourself.

2 Leave the toxic area immediately.

Poisoning by inhalation can occur as a result of toxic fumes, smoke, or gas.

Move the person, and anyone else in the vicinity, to an area safe from these substances. It's best to go outdoors, well away from the building where the inhalation occurred.

- If you have to rescue the person from a building, hold your breath as you go in. Cover your mouth and nose with a wet piece of cloth to filter the air.^[4]
- Some toxic gases, like carbon monoxide, don't have a smell and can't be detected except by a special detector. Don't assume that just because you don't smell or see something toxic, a room or building is safe.
- If it's impossible to move the person, open the doors and windows to let fresh air inside and let the fumes or gas escape.
- Don't light a match or a fire, since some invisible gases are flammable.

3 Check the person's breathing and pulse.

If you don't feel breath or a pulse, administer CPR immediately.

Continue checking the person's breathing and pulse every five minutes until emergency help arrives.

4 Keep the person comfortable until paramedics come.

Have the person lie down on his or her side, so that he

or she won't choke in case of vomiting. Cushion the person's head with a pillow, and remove constrictive clothing and jewelry.

Method
3

When the Poison Came into Contact With the Skin or Eyes

1 Call the poison control center for a conscious (awake and alert) victim.

This will enable you to seek specific advice on treating the victim. Stay on the phone and follow all the instructions given to you by emergency assistance or the poison control center.

- If the person's skin or eyes were exposed to a corrosive substance, have the bottle ready so you can describe it to the poison control center attendant.
- Some containers have information about what to do in case of skin contact; take those instructions into account as well.

2 Remove traces of the substance.

If the poison is a skin corrosive, remove the victim's clothing from the injured area. Discard the clothing, since it will no longer be wearable and could injure someone else. Be sure there's no chance that you or the person who has been poisoned will suffer more exposure to the substance.

3 Flush the area with lukewarm water.

Run lukewarm water over the skin or eyes, whatever was exposed, for 15 to 20 minutes. If a burning sensation persists, keep flushing the area until medical help can be obtained.

- If the poison has come in contact with the victim's eyes, ask the person to blink a lot but to avoid rubbing his or her eyes, since this could cause further damage.
- Don't use hot or cold water to flush the area.

Community Q&A

How do I give first aid for a snake bite?

Jonas DeMuro,
M.D.

There's a lot to know about snakebites. I would refer you to the Wikihow article on "3 Ways to treat a Snake Bite."
<http://www.wikihow.com/Treat-a-Snake-Bite>

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Chat with this expert

What are the side effects from ink poisoning? Can it be fatal?

wikiHow
Contributor

If the ink has only come in contact with the skin, you must wash it thoroughly with lukewarm water until the substance can no longer be seen by the naked eye. If you do this straight away, then there is no reason to worry. If you have swallowed the ink or got it in your mouth, make sure that any of the remaining ink has been spat out and the mouth (or affected area) has been thoroughly cleaned with lukewarm water.

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Tips

- Follow the directions on the label when giving or taking medicines.
- Read the label before using a product that may be poisonous.
- Remember, the goal in the first place is to prevent a poisoning from happening. To prevent future poisonings, keep all potential toxins stored responsibly out of reach of children.
- It's a good idea to have a list of common poisonous plants from your region or in your garden, with photos, so that you can easily recognize berries, flowers, etc.
- Do not induce vomiting unless you're advised to do so by medical professionals.
- Whenever possible, have the container or label from the poison with you when you call for help. You'll need to answer questions about the poison.
- Place the poison control number near your home telephone and save it to your cell or mobile phone. The numbers for poison control centers are:
 - USA Poison Control Center (24 hours): **1-800-222-1222**
 - Canada: See the NAPRA/ANORP site http://napra.org/pages/Practice_Resources/drug_information_resources.aspx?id=2140 for provincial numbers
 - UK National Poisons Emergency: **0870 600 6266**
 - Australia (24 hours a day, 7 days a week - Australia wide): **13 11 26**
 - New Zealand National Poisons Center (24 hours): **0800 764 766**
- Do not administer syrup of ipecac. This is no longer advised as an appropriate approach to treating poisoning and can either mask symptoms or interfere with reliable treatment options.^[5] Vomiting alone will not remove poisons from a stomach.^[6]

Warnings

- Always call for emergency assistance no matter what form of poisoning has occurred. Quick and proper medical assistance is imperative.
- Do not try to remove pills from the mouth of an infant, it could force the pills further into the throat.
- Never leave children alone with household products or drugs. Keep all poisonous and toxic items safely out of reach and securely stored.
- Never mix household cleaning or chemical products together as some combined chemicals can create toxic gases.

Sources and Citations

1. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007579.htm>
2. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-poisoning/FA00029>
3. <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/007579.htm>

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