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Chemical Emergencies

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Learn about household chemical risk. Contact authorities on hazardous household materials, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, for information about potentially dangerous household products and their antidotes. Ask about the advisability of maintaining antidotes in your home for cleaners and germicides, deodorizers, detergents, drain and bowl cleaners, gases, home medications, laundry bleaches, liquid fuels, and paint removers and thinners

Keep all medicines, cosmetics, cleaning products, and other household chemicals out of sight and out of the reach of children. The most common home chemical emergencies involve small children eating medicines. Experts in the field of chemical manufacturing suggest that moving hazardous materials out of sight could eliminate up to 75 percent of all poisonings of small children.

Flush medicines that are no longer being used or that are outdated down the toilet and place the empty container in the trash. Outdated medicines can sometimes cause effects. Flushing them will eliminate the risk of people or animals picking them out of the garbage.

Store household chemicals according to the label's instructions. Non-food products should be stored tightly closed in their original container so you can always identify the contents of each container and how to properly use the product.

Avoid mixing common household chemical products. Some combinations of these products, such as ammonia and chlorine bleach, can create toxic gases

Always read the directions before using a new product. To avoid inhaling dangerous vapors, do not use some products in a small, confined space. Other products should not be used without gloves and eye protection to help prevent the chemical from touching your body.

Read instructions on how to dispose of chemicals properly. Improper disposal can result in harm to you or members of your family, accidental contamination of the local water supply or harm to other people. It is also important to dispose of products properly to preserve the environment and protect wildlife. Plus, some products can be recycled, which helps protect the environment. If you have

Small amounts of the following products can be safely poured down the drain with plenty of water: antifreeze, bathroom and glass cleaner, bleach, drain cleaner, fertilizer, household disinfectant, laundry and dishwashing detergent, rubbing alcohol, rug and upholstery cleaner, and toilet bowl cleaner.

Small amounts of the following products should be disposed of by wrapping the container in newspaper and plastic and placing it in the trash: brake fluid, car wax or polish, dish and laundry soap, drain cleaner, fertilizer, furniture and floor polish, insect repellent, nail polish, oven cleaner, paint thinners and strippers, pesticides, power cleaners, toilet bowl cleaner, water-based paint and wood preservative.

Dispose of the following products at a recycling center or a collection site: kerosene motor or fuel oil, car battery or battery acid, diesel fuel, transmission fluid, large amounts of paint, paint thinner or stripper, power steering fluid, turpentine, gun cleaning solvents and tires.

Empty spray cans by pressing the button until nothing comes out, then place the can in the trash. Do not place spray cans into a burning barrel, incinerator or trash compactor because they may explode.

Never smoke while using household chemicals. Avoid using hair spray, cleaning solutions, paint products, or pesticides near the open flame of an appliance, pilot light, lighted candle, fireplace, wood-burning stove, etc. Although you may not be able to see or smell them, vapor particles in the air could catch fire or explode.

If you should spill a chemical, clean it up immediately with rags, being careful to protect your eyes and skin. Allow the fumes in the rags to evaporate outdoors in a safe place, then dispose of them by wrapping them in a newspaper and placing them in a small plastic bag. Dispose of these materials with your trash.

Buy only as much of a chemical as you think you will use. If you have product left over, try to give it to someone who will use it. Storing hazardous chemicals increases risk of chemical emergencies.

Keep an A-B-C-rated fire extinguisher in the home and car, and get training from your local fire department on how to use them. Should chemicals ignite, you will have an opportunity to extinguish the fire before it spreads, avoiding greater damage.

Post the number of the nearest poison control center by all telephones. In an emergency situation, you may not have time to look up critical phone numbers.

Learn to detect the presence of a hazardous material. Many hazardous materials don't have a taste or odor. Some materials can be detected because they cause physical reactions such as watering eyes or nausea. Some hazardous materials exist beneath the surface of the ground and can be recognized

Learn to recognize the symptoms of toxic poisoning:

- Difficulty in breathing
- Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat or respiratory tract
- Changes in skin color
- Headache or blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination.
- Cramps or diarrhea