

Keeping Babies and Preschoolers Safe from Addictive, Toxic Substances

*Over the past decade, the number of children who have had gotten sick from touching or eating poisonous, addictive substances has gone up. Fortunately, there are things parents can do to stop these incidents from ever taking place. **It is never too early for parents to begin protecting their children from the potentially life-threatening harms of addiction and addictive substances.***

Educate Yourself

Most homes contain items considered “addictive and toxic.” Some of these items may not be harmful to adults when used properly. A doctor may have even prescribed some. Yet, they can still be dangerous for kids, especially children under the age of six.

Items parents should be aware of include:

- **Nicotine** like e-liquids used with e-cigarettes; nicotine gum or patches
- **Alcoholic beverages** like sweetened mixed drinks, beers, wine coolers and hard liquor
- **Caffeine** like coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks and some snack foods like potato chips, candy bars and specialty water
- **Prescription medicines** like painkillers, tranquilizers and sedatives
- **Marijuana** like edibles in the form of baked goods, candy and beverages
- **Illegal drugs** like cocaine, psychedelic mushrooms, methamphetamine and heroin

The Youngest Victims of the Addiction Epidemic

Due to of America’s current addiction crisis, dangerous drugs, including opioids, are more common than ever before. Children living in homes affected by addiction are more likely to encounter drugs, alcohol and nicotine products.

Parents and caretakers with addiction should seek treatment from a medical professional. To learn more, visit centeronaddiction.org/addiction-treatment.

Know the Symptoms

Each baby or preschooler may react differently after touching or eating an addictive, toxic substance, but some common symptoms to look out for include:

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Slurred speech
- Stomach pain
- Nausea/throwing up
- Rapid heart rate
- Trouble breathing
- High body temperature
- Hallucinations
- Seizures
- Not responding
- Coma
- In extreme cases, death

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Be Safe, NOT Sorry

Follow this advice to keep your children and others out of harm's way:



Store and dispose of all addictive substances, including prescription medicines with care. Keep addictive substances out of sight and out of reach. Save medicine in its original, child-resistant packaging.



Limit the amount of addictive products in your home. Safely get rid of medicines or addictive foods, beverages and drugs you don't need. If you must keep some of these items, like prescription medicines, in your home, request them in small amounts.



Set a good example for children. Kids do what they see adults doing – be aware of how drinking, smoking, or taking medicines and/or drugs may appear to them.



Save the phone number for the national Poison Help Hotline in your phone: call 1-800-222-1222 or text POISON to 797979. The nation's poison control centers are available to help 24/7/365. All calls are answered by local poison control specialists and are confidential.



Be honest with your doctors. Tell them if you think something addictive or toxic has caused harm to your child. Telling the truth could save a child's life.

For more information and tips on what parents can do to protect children from the harms of substance use and addiction, visit centeronaddiction.org and aapcc.org.



The National Center on
Addiction and Substance Abuse

