

POISONING

S—Symptoms and treatment both depend on what poison was taken. Try to find out what was taken and when. The bottle is often helpful. Ask about possible symptoms such as:

- Weakness
- Stomach pain
- Nausea/vomiting
- Seizures

O--Move quickly. Look for mouth burns, smell the breath, and check the state of consciousness. Lay on side with head a little extended to keep airway open if the patient is not conscious.

Take to hospital immediately

1. **KEROSENE OR GASOLINE**—This poisoning most often happens with small children who drink kerosene that has been put in a soda or beer bottle. The breath of the child will smell like kerosene. The child will be **coughing** if kerosene has gotten into his trachea. After some time if he has taken a large amount he may become unconscious or convulse.

a. Do not cause vomiting—vomiting may cause the patient to aspirate kerosene into his lungs and he will develop the serious complication of hydrocarbon pneumonia.

b. Unless the amount is very small such as one swallow (and often it is very small), and unless no coughing is present, send the patient to the hospital.

2. CAUSTIC SODA, WASHING SODA, OR LYE—Most often this type of poisoning happens to small children who find caustic soda water in a dish for making soap. Usually the child has burns on the lips and in the mouth.

a. Do not cause vomiting.

b. Do not put a tube down to wash out the stomach.

c. If swallowed within the last 2 hours, **immediately give the child as much orange juice, lime juice, or dilute vinegar** (1 cup vinegar with 3 cups water) as the child will drink. This will destroy the poison. Use milk if nothing else is available—it may soothe the chemical burns, but does not neutralize lye.

d. Then send the child to the hospital. A later complication may be esophageal strictures (scarring) that will prevent the child from being able to swallow food. Some chest surgeons can treat this.

3. PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES (in overdose or taken by child): If conscious, cause the patient to vomit immediately. Then send the patient to the hospital. In the hospital wash out the stomach with an NG tube, and admit him for the doctor to treat complications from the medicine.

4. PLANTS—Some plants are poisonous. If a child eats a plant that you do not know to be safe, cause him to vomit immediately. Send him to the hospital if he has any symptoms.

5. COUNTRY MEDICINES—Some country medicines are poisonous, especially in large doses. The most common complications of poisoning from country medicines are acute kidney failure, jaundice from liver damage, and toxic colon—all of which can cause death. Most patients with poisoning from too much country medicine do not come to the clinic until

they are very sick. Send them to the hospital.

6. COMMON MEDICINES (which are usually thought of as safe) can cause poisoning—

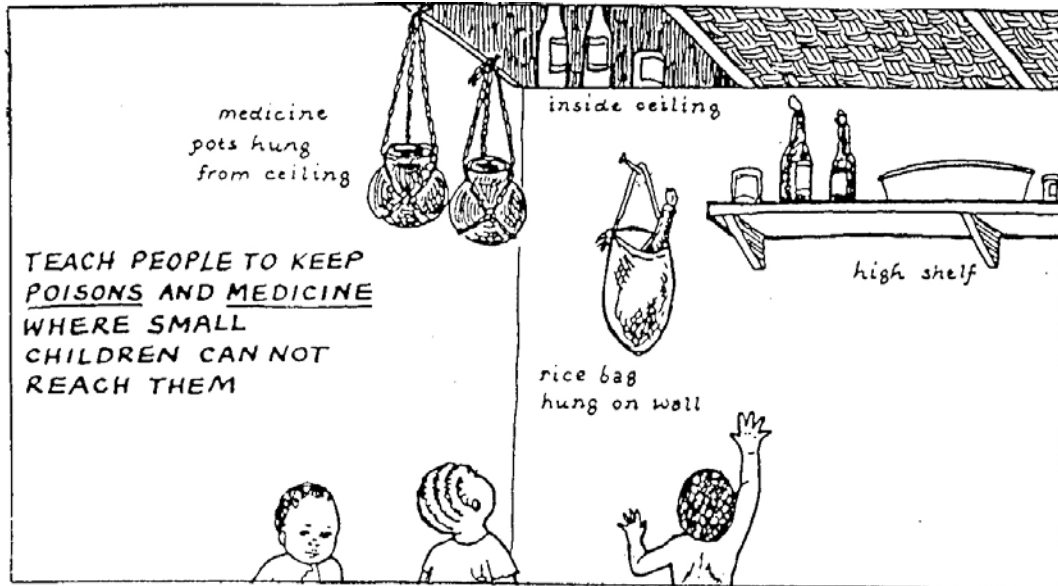
- a. **Aspirin** in large amounts can cause death—cause vomiting immediately.
- b. **Too much iron** can be poisonous—a few iron tablets or many vitamin tablets also containing iron can cause a child to die—cause vomiting immediately, and send the person to the hospital.
- c. **Paracetamol** in amounts larger than 4,000 mg/day (adult) can destroy the liver and cause liver failure and death. Paracetamol is dangerous in smaller amounts if the liver has been damaged by hepatitis B or excessive alcohol— induce vomiting and send the patient to the hospital.

7. DIELDRIN-- This is a dangerous insecticide or “bug-a-bug medicine” commonly used in Liberia. It damages the liver and brain. It causes jaundice, excitability, shakiness, and convulsions, and may cause death. It doesn’t even have to be swallowed—it is very rapidly absorbed through the skin.

- a. If swallowed, lavage the stomach with the head down, and suction to avoid aspiration if possible. Otherwise cause the patient to vomit (although not usually recommended), and send him immediately to the hospital even if he has no symptoms.
- b. If wasted on the skin, scrub the skin with soap and water. No more may be needed, but if any signs or suggestions of symptoms develop, send him to the hospital.

Prevention of Poisoning in Children

Never place kerosene in a beer or soda bottle. Always keep kerosene, caustic soda powder or water, and all medicines where children cannot reach them.



CHANTS TO USE IN TRAININGS

KEEP LYE UP HIGH
SO CHILDREN DON'T DIE

USE A LID
SHUT IT TIGHT
HIDE THE LYE