

Poison Control

News

Helpful Information & Safety Hints from the New England Regional Poison Control Centers

Fall 2004

The Poison Control News is an informative quarterly newsletter produced in collaboration by the four New England Regional Poison Control Centers. Working together through a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, this newsletter focuses on topics such as seasonal poison prevention tips, access to poison centers and understanding the risks and avoidance of environmental poisons.

If you have any poisoning questions or concerns, call your poison center using the national toll-free number 1-800-222-1222. You will be connected to your designated poison center: Connecticut Poison Control Center, Massachusetts/Rhode Island Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention, and Northern New England Poison Center serving Maine, New Hampshire & Vermont.

Spotlight on.....

Protect People & Pets while Protecting Your Car

By: Rebecca Miller, RN, Northern New England Poison Center

Although antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid improve driving safety, both are poisons. Antifreeze, sometimes labeled “antifreeze/coolant,” keeps the engine from freezing in the winter and overheating in the summer. Windshield wiper

fluid improves visibility in cold and stormy weather by melting ice and cleaning the windshield. Both can cause serious effects if swallowed, even in small amounts.

Antifreeze usually contains ethylene glycol. Windshield

wiper fluid usually contains methanol. Both are toxic. As little as one tablespoon of ethylene glycol can cause kidney failure or death. Even smaller amounts of methanol, one teaspoon, can cause blindness or death. Be aware that other products such as brake fluids

and de-icing products may also contain methanol or ethylene glycol.

Fortunately, not all “glycols” are a problem. Propylene glycol, found in some cosmetics, inks, room deodorants and food preservative, is not very toxic.

If an antifreeze or windshield wiper poisoning occurs, DO NOT “wait and see” if a person or pet will have a problem. You may not notice ill effects for several hours or longer.

Possible effects of antifreeze/coolant or windshield wiper fluid poisoning:

- Vision problems
- “Snowy” vision
- Blurred or double vision
- Blindness, which may be permanent
- Nausea and vomiting
- Heart rhythm changes
- Seizures
- Coma
- Kidney and/or liver failure

SPANISH TRANSLATION

Anticongelante y Limpiador Parabrisa

By: Vilma Rodrigues, Rhode Island & Massachusetts Poison Center

Proteja su automóvil sin poner en peligro la salud de la gente y sus mascotas. El anticongelante y el limpiador de parabrisas mejoran el mantenimiento de su vehículo pero a su vez ambos son venenosos. El uso del anticongelante impide que su automóvil se congele en el invierno y también que se sobre caliente en el verano. Usted lo conoce como el “coolant”. El limpiador de parabrisas ayuda a mantener su visibilidad durante fuertes lluvias y nevadas. Ambos pueden afectar su salud y también las de su mascotas si son ingeridas.

El etilenglicol de glicol es un químico que se encuentra en el anticongelante. El limpiador de parabrisas también contiene un químico conocido como el metanol. Ambos pueden intoxicar a la gente y también a los animales. Una cucharada de etilenglicol puede causar un fallo renal o aun la muerte. Solamente una cucharada del metanol puede causar la muerte o la ceguera en los niños.

El liquido de frenos y otros anticongelantes contienen metanol y también etilenglicol.

El glicol no siempre presenta un peligro. El glicol propileno es menos toxico y se encuentra en cosméticos, tintas, desodorantes, y en los preservativos de alimentos.

Pueden pasar horas antes de sentir los efectos del consumo del limpiador de parabrisas y el anticongelante. Uno nunca debe de esperar a buscar ayuda si sospecha envenenamiento.

El consumo de antiparabrisas y el anticongelante pueden causar:

- Problemas de visión
 - visión borrosa
 - visión nublada
 - ceguera (puede ser permanente)

Many children, and adults, accidentally drink antifreeze or windshield wiper fluid when it is stored in drink containers. Also, animals sometimes drink antifreeze that spills or leaks out of radiators. It has a sweet taste.

Prevent antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid poisoning.

- Keep caps tightly closed.
- Store products out of sight and reach.
- Keep products in the original containers.
- Clean up radiator spills or leaks immediately.

For more information, call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222.



- Vómitos y nauseas
- Cambios en el ritmo del corazón
- Infartos
- Coma
- Fallo renal/ hepático

A menudo muchos niños y adultos ingieren el anticongelante y el limpiador de parabrisas cuando estos líquidos no se encuentran en sus envases originales. Los animales lo encuentran en los charcos causados por derrames y escapes en los radiadores en los automóviles. El sabor dulce del anticongelante atrae a los animales y también las mascotas.

Usted puede evitar el envenenamiento a causa el anticongelante y el limpiador de parabrisas.

- Mantenga las tapas de sus envases fuertemente apretadas
- Los productos deben sé guardados fuera del alcancé y de la vista de los niños
- Mantenga estos productos en sus envases de origen
- Limpie los derrames y los escapes de líquidos inmediatamente

Para obtener mas información sobre este asunto, llame a su centro de envenenamiento al numero 1-800-222-1222.

Fall Clean-up

By: Amy Hanoian Fontana, MS - CT Poison Control Center

Fall clean-up routines come with cooler weather. New Englanders must close up boats, secure camping equipment and check furnaces.

- **Snakes and Spiders:**

Critters like snakes and spiders may be hiding in dark covered places. Steer clear of a bite. Do not disturb them. Do not place hands or feet in dark areas when you cannot see what is there.

- **Carbon Monoxide:**

Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Inspect all fuel burning equipment and appliances. A professional should clean and check ventilation each year. Install a CO detector in your home, preferably near sleeping areas. It could save lives.

Back to School!

Remember that your friendly school nurse has the poison center number in case of poisoning during the school day. School nurses and other health staff can be a great resource for learning about poisons and poison prevention. Ask around. See what your school has to offer!

ARACHNOPHOBIA (Part 1)

By: Avery Adam, MS, MA/RI Regional Center for Poison Control & Prevention

You may have read the recent news headlines about black widow spiders. There are primarily two spiders in the United States that are harmful to humans: the brown recluse and the black widow. Occasionally a brown recluse or black widow will make its way to this part of the country. Usually the spiders are only “passengers” in boxes, crates or even cars that have originated from warmer climates.

Bites from all spiders can result in mild redness and pain; treatment consists of washing the wound and applying an antibiotic ointment. A cool compress may help. The victim should seek medical attention if there are signs of an infection, an ulcer that does not heal, or a bite is accompanied by nausea, vomiting, fever, rash, or if severe pain or cramping spreads from the bite to other parts of the body.

Black widow spiders (*Latrodectus*) measure approximately one-half inch in length and have a shiny black body with red, yellow, or orange markings on the abdomen. This mark may assume an hourglass appearance. Only the female spider

is a danger to humans. Black widows may be found in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and the southern parts of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. However, true black widow spider sightings or bites are uncommon in New England.

If a black widow spider bites, do not panic! No one in the United States has died from a black widow spider bite in over 10 years. Very often, no serious symptoms develop. Black widow bites may go unnoticed or feel like a sharp pinprick. These spiders may bite more than once and may hold on for a few seconds. The wound site may show one or two small puncture wounds. Within 20-40 minutes the patient usually experiences a dull ache or numbing sensation near the bite site. Pain progresses and spreads to the abdomen (stomach cramps), back, and extremities.

If muscle cramps develop or pain is severe, take the patient to the nearest hospital. Some victims need to be evaluated at a healthcare facility. There is treatment for a black widow spider bite that can take care of the symptoms. Various medications are used to treat the muscle cramps, spasms and

pain of a bite. Black widow spider antivenin is seldom necessary, but may be considered in very young children, the elderly or pregnant women if they do not respond to standard therapy.

The brown recluse (*Loxosceles reclusa*) measures approximately two-fifths of an inch in length, with long legs (3/4"). A dark violin shape located behind its three pairs of eyes gives it the name "fiddle back" spider. Color may range from yellow to pale or dusky brown. Most active at night, this shy, solitary spider is called a "recluse" because it hides and is not commonly found out in the open. The brown recluse is not native to any of the New England States. “Brown recluse spider bites” in this area of the country are usually caused by other spiders or bugs, or are other medical, non-bite, problems.

At first, the bite of the brown recluse may go unnoticed, although slight pain has been reported. Within the first hour, a local burning/stinging sensation develops. The bite area becomes red and skin temperature increases. Within four hours, the area exhibits a "bull's-eye" appearance, form-

ing a blister in some cases. This blister may rupture in 8-36 hours, creating an ulcer.

There is no special treatment or medication used to treat a brown recluse spider bite. If infection develops, antibiotics are used. If a wound becomes deep and infected, occasionally surgery is needed. Anytime there is a bite or a wound that is not healing and getting worse, see a physician for evaluation.

Part II will include Tarantulas, Daddy Longlegs and jumping spiders.

PREVENTION OF SPIDER BITES:

- Keep attics, garages, and basements clean.
- Wear gloves, shoes, and socks when gardening, cleaning the garage, or cutting/carrying firewood.
- Do not leave soiled shoes outside where spiders may crawl in.
- Inspect and shake clothing before use. Do not hang clothes against walls.
- Seal small openings where spiders may enter house.
- Place bed so it doesn't touch the wall.
- Avoid reaching into dark closets, boxes or other places where spiders may live without looking first.

RESOURCES

National Poison Control Hotline:
1-800-222-1222

The USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
<http://www.reeusda.gov>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment
<http://www.state.ma.us/dph/behawhowe.htm>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 1, New England
<http://www.epa.gov/region1/>

www.poisonprevention.org
Poison Prevention Week Council
Site includes fact sheet, listing of national events, and list of educational materials available.

www.18002221222.info
American Association of Poison Control Centers
Website includes information on poisons, national poisoning statistics, Poison Help jingles in English and Spanish, and links.

<http://www.epa.gov/epa-home/educational.htm>
Environmental Protection Agency

Site has poison information geared towards younger kids and students, coloring activities, science fair advice, envirofacts (check for toxins, air quality, etc in your zip-code).

poisoncontrol.uchc.edu
Connecticut Poison Control Center

<http://www.maripoisoncenter.com/>
Regional Center for Poison Control and Prevention serving Massachusetts and Rhode Island

www.fahc.org
(type 'poison center' into the search box)
Northern New England Poison Center (serving Maine, New Hampshire & Vermont)

In the News...

Poisoning by Mistaken Identity

By: Karen Simone, PharmD, DABAT, Managing
Director Northern New England Poison Center

Poisoning is often a case of mistaken identity. Many cases involve poisons that look like food, drink or candy. Hemorrhoid cream and diaper rash ointment are mistaken for toothpaste. Calls to Poison Centers are from people who have swallowed pesticides, bleach or other cleaners that were poured into drinking glasses or drink containers. Others swallow the wrong medicine or someone else's medicine.

Many household products look like food, drink or candy. Because young children cannot read, they are sometimes unable to tell the difference. Children often bite or a swallow poisons before realizing their mistake.

Take a tour around the house. Check for poisons within reach. Pay special attention to poisons that may look like something good to eat or drink.



The following items may be confused:

Product:	Looks Like:
Bleach	Water
Chocolate laxatives	Chocolate candy
Iron tablets or prenatal vitamins	Candy
Red lamp oil	Cranberry juice
Pine cleaners	Apple juice
Windshield wiper fluid	Blue sports drink

Some of these products are dangerous in small amounts. Many do not have child resistant packaging.

Tips to prevent “look alike poisoning”:

- Keep products in the original, labeled container.
- Never call medicine “candy.”
- Put medicine and household products away after use.
- Clean out your medicine cabinet regularly.
- Turn the lights on before taking or giving medicine.
- Put glasses on (if you need them) before taking or giving medicine.
- Keep the poison center telephone number nearby.

For more information, call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222.

Have a Safe Thanksgiving

The last thing that you want at Thanksgiving dinner is an uninvited guest: food poisoning. Food poisoning is generally a mild illness that results from poor food handling. Symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal discomfort, fever, and headache. The culprit is bacteria or toxins made by bacteria. Proper handling and cooking of your turkey can prevent food poisoning:

- Do defrost a frozen turkey by refrigeration or a cold-water bath.

* In a cold-water bath, change the water every 30 minutes.

- Do allow 1 day for every 5 pounds if thawing in the refrigerator.

* A 20-pound turkey will take 12 hours to thaw in cold water.

- Do use a meat thermometer to check if the turkey is done cooking (180°).
- Do put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible after the meal.
- Do wash your hands before and after handling.
- Do keep all utensils, dishes, kitchen equipment and work surfaces clean with a diluted bleach solution.



- Do not defrost a turkey on the counter at room temperature.
- Do not refreeze a thawed uncooked turkey.
- Do not partially cook the turkey one day and continue roasting the next day.
- Do not cook stuffing inside the turkey
- Do not leave leftovers on the counter longer than 2 hours.

In The News.....

Did you know that poison centers in the eight Northeastern states (New England, New York and New Jersey) worked together to write a Poison Data Book for the Northeast Injury Prevention Network? Poisonings are a public health problem in each state and across the region.

Consider a few new facts for the eight Northeastern States:

- 3,246 deaths from poisoning each year
- 34,276 hospitalizations due to poisoning each year
- 279,446 poison center calls about poisoning each year

Not all poisonings involve young children getting into containers of bleach or vitamins. The data book shows that teens, adults and seniors are also victims of poisoning. Older adults have problems with medications. Teens and adults take narcotics and hallucinogens to get high, and attempt suicide. Poisoning affects everyone. Contact your local poison educator for more information.

Poison Centers need your support. The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science recently issued a report about the future of poison centers. Write to state and national legislators and let them know that your poison center is a needed and valued service. You can find the report at <http://www.nap.edu/books/0309091942/html/>.



For poison emergencies anywhere in the U.S.A.
call 1 (800) 222-1222

The following names are the poison center
educators serving the New England region.

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