

Prevention: the antidote to poison

By Kelley Coburn, Pharmacist

Spring must be on the way. The south side of the igloo my son and I built for the grandkids has gone missing. Other rites of that long awaited season will surely follow. Windows will need washing. The apple tree will need a good pruning. Sally and I will stand out on the visible portions of the front lawn and wonder once again if snow really melts. There is always the temptation to believe that, by some mysterious process, it has all been converted into the collection of boots, gloves, and toys that bear a telling resemblance to items seen months earlier at the homes of various neighbors. Once again the dog will deny any culpability.

All of us who live in this country must deal with these seasonal tasks. Sadly, a much more urgent task is all too often overlooked. To ignore the awareness message broadcasted to the nation during the week of March 20-26th, Poison Prevention Week is to invite consequences that are impossible to over-exaggerate.

As a pharmacist employed at Teton Valley Hospital, I urge you to give heed to the following information provided by the Poison Prevention Week Council.

- Use child-resistant packaging properly by closing the container securely after use.
- Keep all chemicals and medicines locked up and out of sight.
- Call the poison center 1-800-222-1222 immediately in case of poisoning.
- When products are in use, never let young children out of your sight, even if you must take the child or product along when answering the phone or doorbell.
- Keep items in original containers.
- Leave the original labels on all products, and read the label before using.
- Do not put decorative lamps and candles that contain lamp oil where children can reach them because lamp oil is very toxic.
- Always leave the light on when giving or taking medicine. Check the dosage every time.
- Avoid taking medicine in front of children. Refer to medicine as "medicine," not "candy."
- Clean out the medicine cabinet periodically, and safely dispose of unneeded medicines when the illness for which they were prescribed is over. (Visit www.smarxtdisposal.net to view a short video describing an environmentally responsible method to dispose of unwanted medication.)

The theme for this year's campaign is "Children Act Fast...So Do Poisons!" From the looks of things your lawn will likely be covered with snow for some time. Instead of pacing about waiting for an opportunity to get out and roll up hoses that have lain out all winter, make a quick inspection of the manner in which drugs and chemicals are stored in your home. Keep in mind that many children have been poisoned while visiting grandparents. For more detailed information visit www.poisonprevention.org.

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