



**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

June 7, 2007

**Poison Prevention for  
Older Adults**

Presented by  
The New York State Poison Control Centers  
and the University of Rochester  
Produced by  
SUNY Albany School of Public Health

Sponsored by



This program is sponsored by the University at Rochester and the Poison Control Centers of New York and supported by funds received through a grant awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration.

Special thanks to the American Association of Poison Control Centers Public Education Committee Senior Study for development and co-authorship of many of the slides and photos in this program.

**Speakers**

**Gail Banach, MS, IDDE, MS, Ed**  
Director of Education  
Upstate New York Poison Center

**Norma A. Barton, BS, CSPI**  
Certified Specialist in Poison Information  
Ruth Lawrence Poison & Drug Center

**Viewer Call-In**

**Phone: 800-452-0662**

**Fax: 518-426-0696**

**Evaluations**

**[Albany.edu/sph/coned/poisonolder.htm](http://Albany.edu/sph/coned/poisonolder.htm)**

**Nursing Contact Hours, CME, CHES  
credits are available.**

*Thank you!*



**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

For more information please contact the  
University at Albany School of Public Health

**518-402-0330**

[www.Albany.edu/sph/coned](http://www.Albany.edu/sph/coned)

## Purpose

This program is designed to help older adults and their care-givers develop techniques to prevent medication errors. The program also identifies general poison prevention safety strategies to keep our older adults safe and healthy.

## Poison Control Centers

As an emergency telephone service

- Provides telephone management information of the poisoned patient and education services to the general public and healthcare professionals
- 24-hour service
- Toll-free number anywhere in the US
- Free of charge



## Poison Control Centers

- Poison Centers were created to reduce the number, cost and severity of poisonings
- 61 Certified Poison Centers are located throughout the U.S.

## Poison Center Services

- Centers provide services to both the general public and to health care professionals through:
  - Emergency management of unintentional as well as intentional poisonings
  - Product and medication information
  - Poison prevention education for the general public and medical and clinical training for healthcare professionals

## Trained Professional Staff

Poison Centers are staffed by

- Physicians
- Pharmacists
- Nurses
- Educators



Poisonings can and do happen in all age groups.



## Calls to Poison Centers 2005

- 51% involved children under 6 years old
- 5% involved adults over age 60
- 16% of fatalities reported to PCC's involve adults over 60
- 93% were managed at home, avoiding unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities
- 21% of calls were information only

Source: Fact Sheet. AAPCC. Highlights of the 2005 Annual Data Report. New Core System Beta.

## Cost Effectiveness

Cost savings of \$7 for every one dollar spent by a Poison Center\*

Source: Miller TR and Lestina DC. Costs of poisoning in the US and savings from poison control centers: a benefit-cost analysis. Ann Emerg Med. 1997;29:23-245.

## How Poison Centers Serve Older Adults

- Your local Poison Center can help older adults with any type of poisoning



## Unintentional Poisonings in Older Adults

In 2005, adults over 60 represented 16% of fatalities reported to Poison Centers.

Most of these **unintentional** poisonings involve medications.



## Our Senior Population

In the U.S. people 65 and older:

- Make up 12% of the population
- Consume more than 30% of all prescription medications
- Purchase 40% of all non-prescription medication

Source: Council on Family Health, 2002. Medicines and You: A Guide for Older Americans Brochure [www.cfinfo.org](http://www.cfinfo.org)

## Older Adults Caring for Younger Children

- More than 55% of unintentional poisonings involve children under 12 who often spend time in the homes of seniors, especially grandparents

## Why Older Adults are at Risk

**FACT:** Older adults consume an average of 5 prescription and 2 over the counter medications daily

**RESULT:** This can lead to a greater risk of drug interactions or adverse reactions

## Why Older Adults are at Risk

**FACT:** Many seniors suffer from failing eyesight which can cause difficulty reading labels

**RESULT :** This can lead to improper use of a medication (such as mistaking ear drops for eye drops, taking the wrong medicine or the wrong dose)

## Why Older Adults are at Risk

**FACT:** Many seniors have difficulty with memory

**RESULT:** Seniors may take incorrect dosages of medication or forget to take meds

**FACT:** Older adults often have pre-existing medical conditions

**RESULT:** These problems may worsen the effect of unintentional poisonings

## Resulting in...

Resulting in

- Interaction
- Misuse
- Adverse reactions

## Interactions

Combined action of ingredients from 2 or more products that create an unwanted effect or even a poisoning



## Story #1: Aspirin

- Joe has been taking a blood thinner for the past year
- As he's concerned about his family history of heart disease he decides to take an aspirin daily



What he doesn't know?  
Aspirin acts as a blood thinner too!

## Story #2: Grapefruit



- Ellen regularly drinks grapefruit juice for vitamin C
- Her doctor prescribes cholesterol-lowering medicine

What Ellen doesn't know?  
An ingredient in grapefruit juice can produce negative side effects

## Misuse

Misuse means not following label directions when using any medication

Examples:

- Multi-dosing
- Forgetting to take medication
- Stopping medication too soon

## Ending Medications Too Soon

- Harriet has been taking an antibiotic for 5 days and feels much better
- She decides to stop taking her 10 day prescription since she feels good

What Harriet doesn't know?  
For an antibiotic to work properly, ALL the medication should be taken according to prescription directions.

## Adverse Reaction

Adverse reaction means an unexpected reaction to a medication – also referred to as 'side effects'

## Story 3: Adverse Reaction



David had a headache and took some acetaminophen

Soon after, he started vomiting

What David should do?  
**Call the Poison Center or a doctor Immediately**

## 6 Questions To Ask About Medications\*



1. What is the name of the medicine?
2. What is the medicine for?
3. What side effects are possible?
4. How much, how often and for how long should it be taken?
5. What if a dosage is missed or if double dosing occurs?
6. What are the precautions when taking this medication?

[http://www.niapublications.org/tipsheets/pdf/Safe\\_Use\\_of\\_Medicines.pdf](http://www.niapublications.org/tipsheets/pdf/Safe_Use_of_Medicines.pdf)



## Medication Safety Tips

- Never share medicine or take someone else's medication
- Call the Poison Control Center if you have questions or if you have a poison emergency



## Final Messages



- Medicines can help keep older adults healthy
- Play It Safe, follow the steps you learned today to help seniors safe from poisoning
- In a poison emergency or for poison prevention information, call your local Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222



*Thank  
You!*



**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**  
UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY State University of New York

## Evaluation

[Albany.edu/sph/coned/poisonolder.htm](http://Albany.edu/sph/coned/poisonolder.htm)

Nursing Contact Hours, CME, CHES  
credits are available.

*Thank you!*