



POISON HELP HOTLINE
1-800-222-1222

**POISON PREVENTION LITERATURE
AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS**
1-615-936-0760

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Tennessee Poison Center UPDATE

WINTER 2007

From the Director

Many people are aware that Tennessee Poison Center provides a medical hotline for poison emergencies and poison prevention education programs; however, it's not common knowledge that Tennessee Poison Center also provides surveillance for chemical or biological terrorism. In fact, Tennessee Poison Center is the only organization in Tennessee that has the capabilities to monitor for bioterrorism 24/7.

This monitoring is accomplished through multiple methods to ensure proper surveillance on all human exposure cases. Monitoring begins with the Specialist in Poison Information (SPI). The SPI who answers the hotline call is a registered nurse, pharmacist or physician with additional training in poison management. SPIs are trained to recognize the possibility of terrorist activity and are on the alert for any unusual symptoms.

Secondly, Tennessee Poison Center collaborates with the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to detect chemical exposure events and ensure effective responses. The focus of these efforts is to use the National Poisoning Data System (NPDS) database to improve public health surveillance of chemical exposures and other potential health hazards. Every 4 to 10 minutes, Tennessee Poison Center, along with the other 60 poison control centers throughout the U.S., uploads its case data to NPDS. NPDS then notifies the center or centers in the event of increased incidence of certain symptoms. NPDS is the only poisoning surveillance database in the United States.

Thirdly, Tennessee Poison Center is working with the Tennessee Department of Health to provide alerts, analysis and training, to keep 6 million Tennesseans safe in the event of a terrorist incident.

Donna Seger



**Are Poinsettia Plants
Poisonous?**

*“Did you know
that poisonings
often happen
when routines are
disrupted?”*

**Poison Centers are
equal to immunizations
in public health delivery.**

The Poinsettia Myth

Many people falsely believe that poinsettias are the most dangerous item in the household during the holiday season. Poinsettias are not harmful. However, other plants and berries are unsafe. Below is a list of some common seasonal plants and their toxicity. Tennessee Poison Center reminds residents to always label or keep a record available of the species

name of all the plants in your home.

Non-toxic holiday plants include:

- Bayberry
- Christmas Begonia
- Christmas cactus
- Christmas dagger fern
- Winter begonia
- Mistletoe cactus (do not confuse with regular mistletoe)
- Poinsettia

Toxic holiday plants include:

- Amaryllis
- Azalea
- Boxberry
- Christmas berry
- Rhododendrum
- Holly
- Christmas pepper
- Chrysanthemum
- Mistletoe (this is the most toxic of all holiday plants)

Holiday Routines

Children home from school, visiting relatives, illness, vacations, shopping trips, and celebrations can disrupt daily household routines. Greater parental supervision may be required during these times to prevent accidental poisonings. Tennessee Poison Center

recommends taking the time to poison-proof your child’s environment so that everyone has a happy and safe winter season.

The Poison Center has several brochures available that will help you keep your home safe from poisons. Last year, Tennessee Poison Center distributed

over 450,000 pieces of poison prevention materials. If you would like to request literature, please call (615) 936-0760 for additional information. All poison prevention literature is free of charge to Tennessee residents.

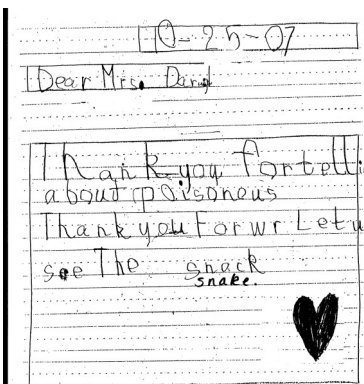
Investing In Our Mission

Calls to Tennessee Poison Center have increased dramatically in the past 5 years. Tennessee Poison Center is the 6th busiest poison control center in the U.S., and our poison specialists answer between 350-375 calls every day.

As the demand for our programs increase, so do the resources needed to provide the highest standard of poison control service to 6 million Tennessee residents. Although our service is free of charge, the medical

expertise provided costs approximately \$46 per call. We hope that you will consider Tennessee Poison Center as you plan your charitable giving. Donations may be made by check or by credit card through www.GivingMatters.com.

Education Is The Key To Poison Prevention



Thank You Letter From a 1st Grade Student

Since 2004 Tennessee Poison Center and the University of Tennessee Extension Educators have collaborated to present poison prevention programs in Tennessee counties. These programs focus on how to identify a poison, how to prevent becoming a poison victim and how to respond in a poison emergency. In 2006 over 45,000 Tennesseans attended a poison prevention presentation.

Tennessee Poison Center works with school nurses and

guidance counselors to present programs in schools. And RiskWatch Tennessee, an injury prevention program for children in preschool through eighth grade, teaches poison prevention as part of its safety curriculum.

Tennessee Poison Center's website- www.tnpoisoncenter.org - is an excellent resource for current information on a variety of education topics.

You can be involved in National Poison Prevention Week Activities in Your Community.

Save the Date—March 16-22, 2008

During National Poison Prevention Week 2008, being celebrated March 16-22, Tennessee Poison Center wants to remind Tennessee residents about the benefits – both medical and financial – of calling the poison center first when you suspect someone has been exposed to a poison. In

fact, for every \$1 that is spent on a call to Tennessee Poison Center, \$7 is saved in other healthcare costs.

In the early 1960s, when National Poison Prevention Week started, more than 450 children died each year because of accidental poisonings. Now, that number is down to less

than 30. Still, at least one million times a year, children in the United States under the age of five are accidentally poisoned. National Poison Prevention Week is an excellent time when communities can call attention to the dangers of accidental poisoning.

Survey Reaffirms Cost Effectiveness

75% of the Poison Help hotline calls are safely managed at home, avoiding unnecessary trips to a physician's office or hospital emergency room. Tennessee Poison Center recently conducted a survey of callers to determine the action they would take if the Poison Help hotline was not available.

44% of the callers replied with an answer that would result in a visit to a hospital emergency room. Hospitals in Tennessee were surveyed to determine the average cost for poison scenarios that could be managed by TPC. From the survey data, it was determined that the state of Tennessee

would pay \$5,789,200 yearly in emergency room fees if Tennessee Poison Center was not in operation. The facts confirm that poison centers save money—and lives.



Scott Muir—a Poison Specialist at TPC for over 20 years



Tennessee Poison Center is a comprehensive poison resource center that provides poison control service to 6 million Tennesseans in 95 counties. Tennessee Poison Center is dedicated to the prevention of poisonings in the home, workplace and environment. Tennessee Poison Center provides clinical advice to the public and healthcare community for the treatment of exposures to drug, chemical, plant or envenomation. The Poison Center's goals are to prevent poisonings, minimize poisoning complications and reduce the number of poison related deaths in Tennessee through telephone hotline intervention, public education, professional education and clinical research.

Tennessee Poison Center receives funding from federal and state grants, the Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee hospitals, United Way agencies, foundations and individual donations.

www.tnpoisoncenter.org

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