

## Poison Prevention Activity – Child-Resistant?

This activity was developed by the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute for those working with parents and caregivers to help prevent child injury. The activity can be led with any number of parents and caregivers. It can also be used in a health fair. This hands-on activity demonstrates the injury risk to children and youth due to poisoning. The activity lists all the materials needed, discussion points, and safety tips.

### Materials needed:

- A variety of containers, emptied and cleaned, such as:
  - a pharmacy pill bottle
  - a cough medicine container
  - an aspirin tablet container
  - a toilet bowl cleaner container
  - a mouthwash container
- Stopwatch



### Discuss the difference between child-resistant and childproof.

Child-resistant packaging is designed to reduce the risk of poisoning in children by being significantly difficult for young children to open within a reasonable time. It is required by regulation for prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, pesticides, and household chemicals.

There is no such thing as childproof packaging because some children will still be able to get into the packaging! Think of packaging as an additional measure to reduce the risk of children accessing potentially harmful items.

Childproofing can also be done to reduce the risk of poisoning. This means recognizing and removing the hazards in the environment. In a home, this could include:

- keeping medications and other potential poisons out of sight and reach of children
- storing medications and other potential poisons in their original, child-resistant containers

### Process:

- Set out the empty/clean containers.
- Time the individual for 1 minute as they try to open each container. After the minute is over, stop the stopwatch and ask the person to put the container down. Repeat up to five times if unable to open within 1 minute.

### Discuss:

- The level of ease or difficulty in opening the container.
- With enough time and persistence, they can open these bottles. In fact, sometimes children seem to be able to open these more easily than adults!
- Child-resistant caps are not a substitute for supervision or for storing potential poisons out of sight and reach.

After individuals have had a chance to try opening the assorted containers, demonstrate how to open the various bottles, as each container will have a unique way of opening.

Child-resistant packages may have the following unique ways of opening:

- Line up the triangles and open
- Push the tab down and turn
- Squeeze the sides and turn
- Push the cap down and turn

Young children's skin is thin compared to older children and adults, making poisoning through skin contact more possible. Due to their small body size, even small doses of medication and poisons can be very dangerous.

**Safety Tips:**

- Always store poison (household cleaning products), medication, and cannabis out of sight and out of reach of children at all times. A locked cabinet or box is preferred for storage.
- Keep medication in its original bottle. That way you will know what the child has taken and can report it to the Saskatchewan Poison Centre or Emergency Department.
- Try not to take medication in front of children. They try to copy an adult's behaviour. If they see you taking the medication, they might copy you.
- Keep the number for Saskatchewan Poison Centre **1-866-454-1212** stored in your contacts and near a home phone.
- Always close packaging. Child-resistant packaging does not work if it is not closed.
- Supervision of children, especially young children, is an important way to prevent unintentional poisoning. It can be difficult to keep children in view at all times. This is why it is important that potential poisons are always kept out of sight and reach of children.

**Additional Materials:**

<https://skprevention.ca/safety/poisoning/>

For a video demonstrating the features of child-resistant containers, view "How do Child Proof Caps work?"

<https://youtu.be/EG8XTxus-Tw>