

PESTICIDE SAFETY

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For the past nine years, pesticide ingestion cases involving children 12 years of age and under have been summarized and reported. Briefly, children who fall into this age bracket who ingest or are contaminated with a hazardous substance are reported to one of the many poison control centers in Illinois. The case is then reported to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

An annual average of 11,567 children eat or are contaminated with a hazardous substance. Medicines (barbiturate, aspirin, drugs or various types, etc.) account for 6,891 cases (60.1%) and make up the major portion of this total. Household preparations (drain cleaners, furniture polish, etc.) account for 1,596 cases or 14.3%. Pesticides (insecticides, rodenticides, etc.) 719 cases (6.5%); Paints 546 cases (4.8%); Cosmetics 324 cases (2.7%) and a miscellaneous grouping of 1,491 cases or 11.7%.

Since 1960 the hazardous ingestion of pesticides has declined from an average annual figure of 8% to 5.2% in 1968. Seasonal variations of pesticide ingestions are quite obvious. For example, most ingestions of rodenticides (mice killers) take place in the fall of the year because this is when mice are attempting to enter your house for winter warmth. Therefore, more people would be using mice baits for control of their problem. Ant bait ingestions are more common during the summer for similar type reasons. Mothball ingestions take place throughout the year, steadily. Mama thinks she's preserving her furniture or whatever by placing mothballs in the cushions or someplace else. However, junior thinks they're candy jawbreakers. Mothballs are used as a fumigant for clothes storage throughout the four seasons. Roach baits are ingested mostly in the fall of the year.

The majority of pesticides ingested by children fall into four groups in relation to the control being sought by the homeowner — rodents, ants, clothes moths and cockroaches. These four accounted for 82.1% of the cases. Of that number 68.5% were ingested as a bait. Baits are a definite hazard to use especially when kids or pets have the opportunity to get their hands — or paws on them.

Twenty-four people have died since 1960 of accidental ingestions of a pesticide. Fifteen involved insecticides (insect killers), five rodenticides, and four herbicides (weed killers). Only one of the 24 deaths was an agricultural accident. The remaining ones happened in or about the home.

When you figure that motor vehicles accounted for 47.2% of the total accidental deaths in Illinois over the past nine years followed by home accidents 26.7%; public accidents 19.2%; occupational accidents 6.6% — firearms 2.4% — pesticides 0.054%, the actual problem is small considering that 15% of all pesticides used are in the city and suburban area. To go even a little further in this breakdown, 28% of all city and suburban land areas (lawns, etc.) are under pesticide use as opposed to 15% of all agricultural cropland. Seventy-five million bug bombs were bought by Americans in 1964 to control some type of insect problem.

Use pesticides safely — The most important 4 minutes in pest control is the time it takes you to read the label.

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