

## **CAC Warns Parents to be more Vigilant to Prevent Child Poisonings**

The Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) is joining the call for adults to be more vigilant in preventing accidental poisonings in the home by child-proofing the home especially when toddlers are present.

“We find it absolutely alarming that thousands of new parents receive the advice from other parents and non-parents alike about childcare yet very few receive tips about how to prevent child poisonings”, CEO of the CAC, Mrs. Dolsie Allen said.

She was reacting to a recent report by the Ministry of Health which indicated that in 2006 of the 11,000 cases of accidental poisonings reported 572 involved children under five years old.

Findings have shown that often these children are poisoned by the products we take for granted and leave lying around the home such as personal care items, household cleaning solutions and over-the-counter drugs.

In Jamaica, the most frequent reports are of children drinking cleaning solutions, namely bleach, that are stored in juice or soda bottles. This frustrates the physicians and nurses who must repeatedly warn the parents about this dangerous habit and watch children become deformed by preventable practices.

Many of these children reportedly bear both internal and external scars and are often disabled for life by the incident. Each year, various agencies put out warnings against such practices; the Ministry of Health placed posters in clinics and hospital emergency rooms to sensitise parents but many still do not heed these warnings.

**Here are some tips which the CAC believes should be posted on the refrigerator for every care giver, family member to read and observe:**

1. If you do not eat or drink the item it should be stored high above any child's reach;
2. Lie flat on the floor and view the world from the toddler's level, then rearrange the room to accommodate and protect the child;
3. Treat the dangerous items like your spending money – lock it away in a strong box out of everyone's reach;
4. If you suspect that your child swallowed a poisonous substance run to the emergency room to not stick your finger in his throat and attempt to force him to vomit;
5. If you have the flower-scented floor cleaner open do not allow yourself to become distracted before you lock it away;
6. Store all items in original containers with the labels in tact; You may need the instructions again or someone else may need to read it later;
7. Do not put candles, kerosene lamps where children can reach them especially during this hurricane season;
8. Always turn the light on when giving or taking medicine. Too often the topical lotion may be placed in a bottle of the same shape and colour as the one to be ingested; Double check the age appropriate dosage;
9. Do not call the medicine "candy" or state that it is "nice". Say it is medicine to make you better when you are sick;
10. Clean out your medicine cabinet or strong box of all outdated medicines; Separate topical solutions and creams from medicines to be ingested and keep them in their original boxes;

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In the US the Washington-based Consumer Protection Agency (CPSC) reported that from 2002 through 2004, about 36 children younger than 5 died each year as a result of ingesting poisonous substances found in and around the home. In 2005 about 91,000 young children visited hospital emergency rooms and more than one million calls were placed to poison control centers as a result of accidental poisoning.

The old adage still holds true: Prevention is better than cure.