

Teaching  
Poison Prevention  
to  
Children  
Grades K-3



Florida Poison Information Center  
Tampa General Hospital  
(813) 844-7044  
[www.poisoncentertampa.org](http://www.poisoncentertampa.org)

Teach poison prevention to preschoolers in your community by sharing fun videos, games and craft activities. The Poison Center would love to support your poison prevention lesson by providing Poison Prevention brochures and telephone stickers for each child to take home. Go to the Order Brochures page at [www.poisoncentertampa.org](http://www.poisoncentertampa.org) and allow two weeks to receive your free order. For more information, email JoAnn Chambers at [jchamber@tgh.org](mailto:jchamber@tgh.org).

## **Contents Outline for Teaching Poison Prevention to Preschoolers:**

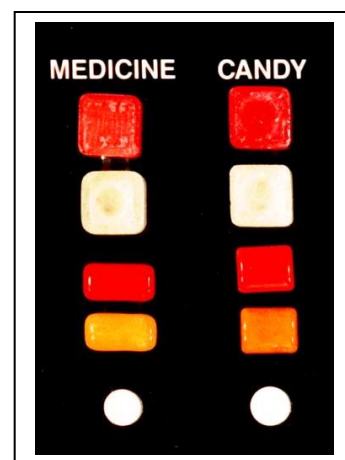
- How to create a tabletop display
- Poison Storytime
  - Lesson 1 Household poisons & Lookalikes
  - Story 1 - Henry and look-alikes
  - Lesson 2 Medicine
  - Story 2 – Leah and Pills
  - Lesson 3 Plants
  - Story 3 – Jamal and Berries
- Parent letter for kids lesson
- Children’s poison prevention video is available at:  
<http://fpicjax.org/videos.asp>
- Poison games
  - Poison Toss game
  - Wheel of Poison game

# Poison Prevention Displays

FL Poison Information Center  
www.poisoncentertampa.org

1. **Candy/Medicine Display** (enclosed). Make a display from available pills. Find candies that look like pills and hot glue on poster board & place in a clear plastic box frame. Let children guess which are pills and which are candy. Explain that in real life, they should NOT guess, but “Ask an Adult before Tasting”! Examples:

White Tylenol caplets and white Good N Plenty  
Red round Sudafed pills and Red Hots  
Colored gelcaps (any kind) and jellybeans  
Pastel round flat antacids and SweetTarts  
Round coated Advil and tropical M&M’s  
Brown round pyridium and M&M’s



2. Make a display of **Poison Look-alikes** (poisons that look like good things to eat or drink). Use any clear containers with a **glued** lid. Examples:  
Clear liquids in 3 containers: Vodka or rubbing alcohol, vinegar, water.  
Blue liquids in 3 containers: Powerade, Windex, Blue mouthwash.  
Yellow liquids: Pine Sol, apple juice. (You’ll need a fresh apple juice every time you display it, because it ferments and gets cloudy.)  
**DO not leave items where children could grab them!**  
Encourage children to guess which product is safe to eat or drink. Emphasize that in real life, it is safer NOT to guess, but to “Ask an Adult before Tasting.”
3. Get silk or potted plants (or photos of them) to make a **Poison Plant Display**, or have the audience guess which plant is poisonous if eaten. See Plant Information Sheet available from FL Poison Information Center.
4. A **Poisonous Critter Display** can be made by gluing rubber spiders, ants, bees, snakes, stingrays, jellyfish, etc. onto a poster board. Critters, or kits for making critters, can be found at craft, nature, science, or toy stores. Use our Florida Critters sheet for correct color descriptions or to cut and paste info about each critter next to it on a board.



## Lesson # 1

### POISONS IN THE HOME

- Grown-ups sometimes use poisons around the home to do jobs like cleaning.
- You should never play with, touch or taste poisons because they can make you sick and hurt you.

#### Teacher's Narrative:

**A poison is something that can make you sick, hurt or kill you if it gets into your body. Poisons can be found inside and outside of our homes. Grown-ups sometimes use poisons to do things around the house, like cleaning floors, washing clothes, killing bugs and killing weeds. Poisons are only if they are used the right way. They can make you sick and hurt you if they get in your body. We should never play with, touch or taste poisons.**

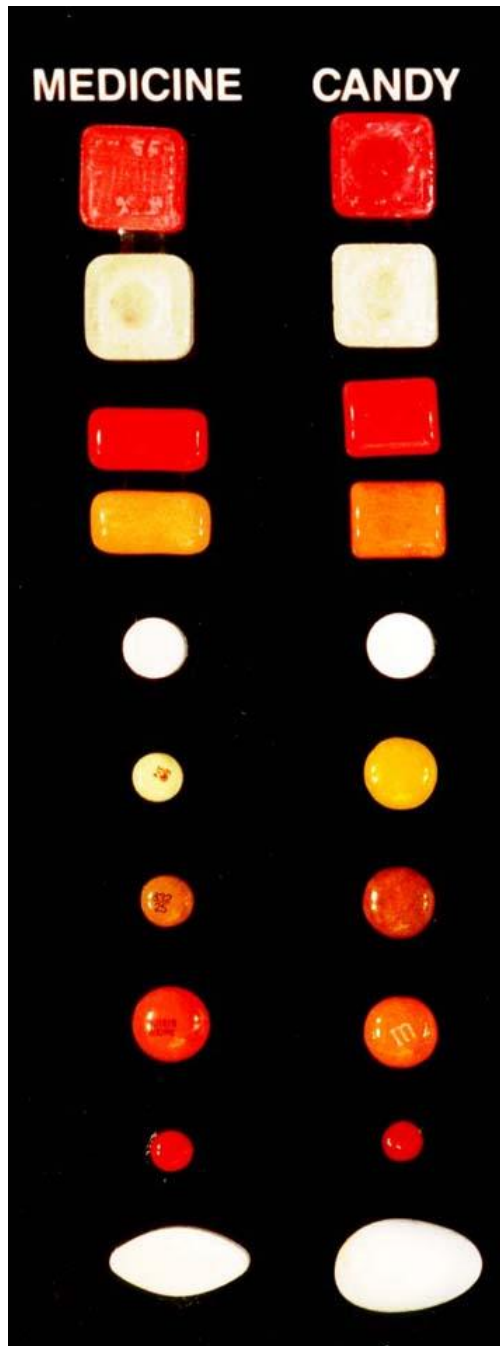
#### Teacher's Note:

**You will find a colored sheet of common poisons that can be found around the house. Alongside each poison is a non-poisonous item that it could be confused with.**

**Purchase two liquids of the same color – one poisonous and one non-poisonous (example – Mr. Clean and Crystal Light Lemonade). You can keep these in their original containers or pour each one into a separate identical container. Ask the children to identify which is poison and which is safe to taste.**

**\*\*\*NOTE: Keep poisons locked up when not in use. Never leave the poisons out unsupervised.**

# Dangerous look-alikes



## *Henry Learns About Poison Look-alikes*

One Saturday afternoon, Henry was playing kickball in his backyard with his friends. It was very hot outside. The kids decided to take a break and get something to drink. Henry and his friends were very thirsty. Henry went into his house to ask his Mom if she would fix them some lemonade. Henry's mom was busy. She was cleaning the kitchen floor. Just as Henry began to ask for the drinks, the phone rang.

"Henry," his Mom said, "you and your friends are going to have to wait a few minutes."

"But, it's so hot!" cried Henry, "I just can't wait another minute!"

While Henry's Mom was answering the phone, Henry saw the bottle of pretty yellow cleaner his Mom was using to clean the floor. It didn't look like cleaner to Henry. He thought it looked like it would be yummy to drink. Henry took the bottle outside to share with his friends. Just as Henry began to drink the pretty yellow liquid, Henry's friends yelled "Stop! Henry, don't drink that!"

### **Ask the questions:**

- **Why do you think Henry's friends tried to stop him from drinking the yellow liquid?**
- **What do you think was in the bottle?**
- **What should Henry's friends tell him?**

Henry's friends tried to stop him because he didn't follow a very important safety rule – Don't touch, don't taste, ask first! Henry took the yellow liquid without asking his mom. He thought it looked yummy, but he wasn't sure what it was. The yellow liquid that looked like lemonade was really floor cleaner and it is a poison.

Henry's friends should tell him to remember the rule – Don't touch, don't taste, ask first!

### Story Conclusion

But, it was too late. Henry already drank the pretty yellow liquid. A few minutes later, Henry didn't feel good. He got very sick. Henry's friends ran and told his Mom what had happened. Henry had to go to the hospital. Henry was lucky. The doctors were able to make him feel better. They told him that he should never play with, touch or taste poisons. Henry promised that he would never eat or drink anything without asking his mom or dad first. Now Henry remembers the rule – Don't touch, don't taste, ask first!

## Lesson # 2

# MEDICINE

- Medicine is something given to us by a grown-up to make us feel better when we are sick or hurt.
- Vitamins are a kind of medicine some people take to keep them healthy and strong. We only take medicine when a grown-up gives it to us.
- Medicine and vitamins come in many pretty colors and shapes. Medicine may be confused with things that look and taste good, like candy.

### Teacher's Note:

**Purchase over-the-counter medicine that looks like candy as an example. (Women's Correctol/Generic Substitute are small, round, pink pills that look like candy). Show the children and ask them if they think that they are safe to taste.**

**\*\*\*NOTE: Keep poisons locked up when not in use. Never leave the poisons out unsupervised.**

## *Leah and the Pink Pills Story*

How many of you have brothers or sisters? I am going to tell you a story about two sisters, Leah and her big sister Sarah. Leah and Sarah did everything together. They rode home on the school bus together, played in the backyard together, and even did a few of the same chores. But one day, Sarah didn't feel like playing. She didn't feel like doing her chores and she didn't even feel like eating her ice cream after dinner.

"I think your sister is sick," said Leah's Dad. The next morning, he took Sarah to the doctor.

The doctor examined Sarah and said, "Sarah is very sick. I will give her some medicine to help her feel better."

The doctor gave Leah and Sarah's Dad a bottle of pink pills to give to Sarah. He told Sarah's Dad to give her one pill in the morning and one pill before bedtime. The doctor told Sarah that she would have to stay home from school and get plenty of rest.

That night Sarah's Dad gave her one of her pink pills.

Leah thought to herself, "Sarah is lucky. She gets to eat those pills that look like yummy candy."

The next morning Sarah was feeling much better. She went to school. She and Leah ran all the way home from the bus stop!

Leah thought to herself, "those pretty pink pills sure did make Sarah feel better. They sure looked yummy too!"

That night after dinner, when no one was looking, Leah snuck into the kitchen and found Sarah's pretty pink pills.

“If Sarah can take these pills, then so can I. They look like yummy candy and they made Sarah feel so much better.”

**Ask the question:**

**Do you think it is okay for Leah to take Sarah’s medicine?  
Why or why not?**

She should never take anyone else’s medicine. It is dangerous to take someone else’s medicine.

Never take someone else’s medicine, even if you’ve had it before. Never take any medicine that isn’t given to you by a parent or grown up. Don’t touch, don’t taste, ask first!

**Continue Story**

Luckily, Leah’s Dad came in and found Leah just before she ate any of the pills.

“Leah,” her Dad cried, “those pills are not candy, they are Sarah’s medicine. You should only take medicine when Mommy or I give it to you. Besides, you should never take anyone else’s medicine, not even your sister’s. You could be poisoned if you take someone else’s medicine,” he added.

Leah promised to never take medicine unless a grown-up gave it to her and to never take anybody else’s medicine.

Leah and Sarah know the rule – Don’t touch, don’t taste, ask first!

## Lesson # 3

# PLANTS

- Plants, flowers, berries and mushrooms found inside and outside are not always safe to eat.
- Some plants, flowers, berries and mushrooms can make you very sick.

### Teacher's Narrative:

**Plants are very pretty. They make our houses and yards look nice. Many plants that we see inside and outside are poisonous. These plants are not the same as plants that we buy in the grocery store or that grow in our gardens. We should never pick and eat any plant, berry, mushroom or flower.**

### Teacher's Note:

**You will find a colored sheet of common poisonous plants in the poison prevention packet. In addition, you will find a green paper with a partial list of poisonous plants. These are just some of the many poisonous plants, flowers, berries and mushrooms found in Florida.**

## *Jamal and the Red Berries Story*

Ben and Jamal were playing catch in the park. They were having a fun, but they had been playing for a long time and Ben was getting tired.

“Hey Jamal, let’s do something else, my hand is getting tired,” Ben yelled to Jamal.

“Okay, but one last pitch!” shouted Jamal. Jamal threw the ball, but Ben couldn’t catch it. The ball rolled down the hill and disappeared into the bushes.

“Oh great, look where the ball went Jamal,” Ben complained. The two boys walked over to the bushes where the ball had disappeared. The bushes were full of colorful red berries.

“Wow, look at those berries. They look like the kind my mom gives me to eat. Hey, Jamal, I dare you to eat some,” said Ben.

### **Ask the following questions:**

- **What should Jamal do?**
- **Is it safe to eat plants, flowers, berries or mushrooms found outside?**

He should never touch or taste anything without asking his parents or a grown up first. Even though the berries he saw looked like the ones that Ben’s mom gave him, they may not be. They could be poisonous. Poisonous plants, berries and mushrooms come in all different colors. Sometimes they look just like berries that are safe to eat. Remember the safety rule – Don’t touch, don’t taste, ask first!

**Teacher's Note:**

**You will find a colored sheet of common poisonous plants in the poison prevention packet. These are just some of the many poisonous plants, berries and mushrooms in Florida.**



Dear Parent,

Your child has been learning about Poison Prevention and Safety this week. Poisoning is a leading cause of death and injury to children in Florida. Poisonings can be prevented.

Your child is bringing home poison safety information and a sticker with the Poison Center telephone number. Please keep this sticker on your telephone in order to have it in case of an emergency.

Why call the Poison Center?

- Free hotline, open 24 hours, 7 days a week
- Staffed by nurses trained in toxicology
- Call can be completed in about 2 ½ minutes
- 70% of poisonings can be treated at home
- Saves time and money

Call the Florida Poison Center with questions about...

- Household products
- Plants & Mushrooms
- Bites & Stings
- Food Poisoning
- Over-the-counter/prescription/herbal drugs

Call the Florida Poison Center anytime you have a poison emergency or questions about the safety of any product, medicine or plant.

1-800-222-1222

## Poison Arts & Crafts

Activities that reinforce a poison lesson can include:

### Pretty but Poisonous:

1. Face-painting or arm-painting the following poison symbols:
  - a. Poisonous snakes
  - b. Skull
  - c. Poisonous flowers
2. Stringing beads in the color pattern of an Eastern Coral snake.
3. Decorating foamie visors or door hangers with the following foamie pieces:
  - a. Marine life
  - b. Flowers
  - c. Reptiles

### Poison Pictures

1. Scrapbooking: Let children cut out photos of products from coupon ads or magazine ads to show examples of Safe To Taste items or Poison items.
2. Fishing:
  - a. Cut and glue photos of Safe To Taste items and Poison Items on card stock and attach a paper clip to each one.
  - b. Make a fishing pole with a stick, string and a magnet where the hook should be.
  - c. Let each child fish a product out of the bunch of products by touching the magnet to the paper clip.
  - d. Have the child tell if it's a safe or poisonous item.
3. Felt Storyboard:
  - a. Cut and glue photos of Safe To Taste items and Poison Items on card stock. Attach a sticky-back piece of Velcro to each.
  - b. Glue a large piece of felt onto poster board as a story board.
  - c. Make up a story/lesson that includes each photo.
  - d. Give each child hold a photo and listen to the story to hear when their item is mentioned.
  - e. As the teacher tells the story, each child comes up to stick their photo on the felt board.



# Interactive Game Poison Toss



For ages 4 - 8

## Purpose:

To increase children's awareness of potential poisons and to encourage them to "Ask before Touching."

## Supplies:

3 large boxes or containers

3 signs to apply to boxes:

- "Safe to Taste" with a picture of a child eating
- "Poison" with a skull & crossbones
- "Ask First" with picture of child asking an adult

Empty containers of medicines, household products, food items

Try to use products that are packaged similarly, for example:

Comet & Grated Parmesan Cheese

Milk jug and bleach jug

Glued-shut plastic containers with the following look-alikes:

Tylenol, Good & Plenty

Sudafed (red), Red Hots

Skittles, Coricidin

Marshmallow, mothball

**Simplify game** by using only 2 containers "Safe to Taste" and "Ask First." **Shorten game** by using a timer or only allowing them to pick only a few products.



**The object of the game** is to not poison yourself (by putting any poisons in "Safe to Taste" box).

## How to play:

Have child sort products into the appropriate box. Tell him to make choices by himself, saying, "If you know it's OK to eat, put it in "Safe to Taste" box. If you know it's bad and you shouldn't taste it, put it in "Poison" box. If you're not sure what it is and want to ask an adult, put it in "Ask First" box." You do not have to know how to read to play this game.

## Teaching Tips:

Children should **not** be helped by parents, but should be making their own decision. Most children will get a few wrong, and you can teach them poison prevention principles by pointing out that they should not take medicines without asking because they may take the wrong amount or that they shouldn't eat things if they don't know what they are.

**Grading the score:** If the child puts everything in the "Ask First" box, that would be correct. When they are at the end of their time, grade them by checking the "Safe to Taste" box. If they put no poisons in it, they got an "A"!

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Wheel of Poison</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">questions and answers</h3>	<p><b>Question:</b> Who is the best person in your house to give you your medicine?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> An adult</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> If you are babysitting your little brother and you find him with an open bottle of aspirin, what could you do?</p> <p><b>Possible correct answers:</b> Find an adult. Take the aspirin away from him. Call the Poison Center. Check his mouth for aspirin.</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> If your friend dared you to eat some mushrooms growing in the yard, would you be able to tell by looking which kind were poisonous?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> NO. It is very difficult to identify wild mushrooms. Only eat mushrooms from the store.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> Name 2 nice-smelling products that could hurt you if you drank them by accident.</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> perfume, air fresheners, lemon-scented polish or cleaners, potpourri oil</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> A vitamin a day is good for you, but can you get sick if you eat too many?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Yes! You can get a bad stomachache, vomiting and diarrhea.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> Your grandmother is coming to visit. She takes medicine and keeps them in her purse. Your baby sister likes to get into purses. What could you do to keep your sister from eating Grandma's pills?</p> <p><b>Possible correct answers:</b> Put the purse inside a locked cabinet or suitcase. Put the purse in a high cabinet.</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Name 3 types of sprays that could hurt you if they got in your eyes or mouth.</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> hair spray, bug spray, oven cleaner, furniture polish, window cleaner, paint, spray adhesive</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What does the word "caution" mean?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> a warning, be careful</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Name another way you can be poisoned besides tasting a poison?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> inhale it (breathe it in), inject (poison forced through the skin by a sting or bite), topical (on the top of the skin), or in the eye</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> If someone swallowed a fatal poison, what would happen? What does "fatal" mean?</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Do all poisonous snakes have rattles?</p>

<p><b>Answer:</b> They would die. Fatal means causing death.</p>	<p><b>Answer:</b> No. Coral snakes, copperheads, moccasins and cobras do not have rattles.</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What is a type of bug that crawls and bites you and makes you itch?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Ants.</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Name a poisonous animal in the ocean that can sting you.</p> <p><b>Possible correct answers:</b> stingray, catfish, jellyfish, man-o-war</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> Who can your parents call on the phone for help if someone got poison in their eyes, mouth, lungs or skin?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> The Poison Center</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> If you don't know the number for the Poison Center, and you have an emergency, what do you dial?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> 911</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> What kind of bug flies and can sting you and make you hurt?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Bees</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Which berries are safer to eat: those growing on a bush in a park or berries from your refrigerator?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> From your refrigerator</p>

<p><b>Question:</b> Name 3 outside poisons.</p> <p><b>Possible Correct Answers:</b> Snakes, spiders, insects, toads, caterpillars, plants, berries, mushrooms, toxic gases, stingrays, catfish, jellyfish, man-o-wars</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> What venomous snakes live in Florida? Name one.</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Eastern diamondback rattler, pigmy rattler, copperhead, cottonmouth (water moccasin), Eastern coral snake</p>
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<p><b>Question:</b> Name a type of poisonous spider.</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> Black Widow or Brown Recluse</p>	
<p><b>Question:</b> Is it OK to eat berries that you find growing on bushes outside?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> No. They could be poisonous</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Is it OK to give your dog pills for people?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> No, they could be too strong for a dog.</p>

<p><b>Question:</b> How many legs do spiders have?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> 8</p>	<p><b>Question:</b> Who in your house is the best person to give you your medicine?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> an adult, mother father, babysitter, grandparent</p>
<p><b>Question:</b> Is it O.K. to step on dead jellyfish on the beach?</p> <p><b>Answer:</b> No. You could still get stung by a dead jellyfish.</p>	