For Immediate Release

Learn how to keep your family safe during Poison Prevention Week

MORGANTOWN, WV (March 15, 2019) — In 2016, more than 9,000 West Virginia residents were accidentally exposed to poison, according to the West Virginia Poison Center (wvpoisoncenter.org). Ingestion of poisons led the way in route of exposure with 12,781 calls made to the WVPC.

Accidental poisonings are the fourth-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov). Children ages 2 and younger are the most likely to be affected.

March 17-23 is National Poison Prevention Week, established by the American Association of Poison Control Centers, so it’s a good time to review how to avoid prevalent household poisons.

Common types of poisonings include medication taken by someone for whom it hasn’t been prescribed, household cleaners, cosmetics and personal care products, toys and other foreign bodies such as small batteries, pesticides, gasoline and automotive products, plants and insect bites and stings.

Potentially poisonous materials such as paint, chemicals, medication and insecticides should be kept out of reach of young children. Their scent and color often attract them to the product, according to the WVPC.

Poisonings can be prevented with necessary precautions such as:

- Store all drugs and medications in their original containers.
- Never refer to medication as candy.
- Never put non-food products in food containers.
Read and follow the directions on all products before using them.
After using any drug or chemical, put the cap back on and store it out of reach and sight of children.
Dispose of unused and out-of-date products properly.

The Morgantown Police Department has a drop-off box for unwanted and unused medications. It is in the lobby area of the department at 389 Spruce St. Drop-offs can be made from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Insect bites and stings are more common in the warmer months but there are ways to avoid contact with potentially dangerous insects. Insects such as bees and wasps generally will stay away from humans; however, if one comes close, the best thing to do is to retreat slowly. Certain plants such as clover and flower trees, as well as strong perfumes and bright colors, can attract them.

In West Virginia, there is only one harmful spider, the black widow, and two harmful snakes, the northern copperhead and the timber rattlesnake. According to the WVPC, bites from any other spider will result in redness and pain but can be treated with soap and water and a cool compress.

If you’re bitten by any snake, remove constrictive items, immobilize the bitten extremity, stay calm and get to the nearest emergency department. Anyone who is bitten by a snake should make sure they are up-to-date on their tetanus shot. DTaP vaccines for children and Tdap vaccines for adults include immunity against tetanus and are available at Monongalia County Health Department.

According to the WVPC, household plants have become one of the leading causes of poisoning via ingestion in children. It is important to be familiar with plants in your household, and if you don’t know what kind of plants you have, have a gardening expert help or research them on the Internet. Any plant can cause unexpected reactions in anyone and it is best to call the WVPC if you believe a plant has been ingested. WVPC’s website contains a list of toxic and non-toxic plants. Don’t assume that because animals eat a plant that it isn’t poisonous.

For more information about how to poison-proof your home or learn more about potential poisons, visit www.wvpoisoncenter.org or call 304-347-1379. To get a DTaP or Tdap vaccine, called MCHD Clinical Services at 304-598-5119 for an appointment.

For more information on MCHD, check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD for up-to-date information on health and safety.