

Protecting Our Children

Medication Mishaps Turn Attention To Poison Prevention

(NAPSA)—As the number of medications in American medicine cabinets continues to grow, poison prevention experts are calling for increased education efforts to reduce the alarming level of accidental poison exposures in the home due to medicines. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC), poison centers answered more than one million emergency calls regarding children under age six in 2001 and half of those calls concerned poison exposures due to medications.

“Americans are taking more medications now than any time in our history,” says Rose Ann Soloway, AAPCC associate director. “With that comes the increased risk of poisonings in children.”

Soloway says that children are at risk because their systems are not equipped to handle many adult medications they may unintentionally ingest. Indeed some common adult medications can even be fatal to children. Many education programs are now reaching out to both parents and children to teach them to be poison safe with medicines. One program in particular, *Safe at Home with Stop-and-Think Sam*, uses its canine mascot to teach kids poison prevention in ways that they will understand, and is free to parents at www.merckmedco.com. The program advises:

- Keep all medications in original, labeled, child-resistant containers. Clean out your medicine cabinet periodically and throw out expired medications.

- No matter how hard it can be to get a child to take medication, never refer to it as candy.

- Don't take your own medication(s) in front of children. Children mimic adult behavior.

- Never play doctor. If the label of an over-the-counter medicine doesn't include instructions for your child's age or weight, ask your pediatrician if it's safe to give and,



***Stop-and-Think Sam* is a cartoon character who uses a stoplight to teach children about poison situations at home.**

if so, what the dose should be. Do not give a prescription medicine to anyone other than the person it's prescribed for.

- Many adult-strength medications contain various ingredients that children cannot handle. Never give your child an adult-strength medication or split adult pills, unless directed by the child's pediatricians.

- Adult-strength iron supplements are dangerous for young children. Lock vitamins and supplements out of reach, just as other medicines are locked up.

- Keep a bottle of Ipecac syrup and/or activated charcoal in the house; the poison center may recommend their use in case of a possible poisoning. Always call the poison center immediately if you think there has been a poisoning. Never wait to see what might happen. Keep the number near your phone: 1-800-222-1222.

To download *Stop-and-Think Sam* information, program materials and lessons, visit www.merckmedco.com.