This issue of the Healthy Camels Newsletter, written by Dr. Emily Prohaska, a Campbell University Resident at Wilson Community Health Center in Wilson, North Carolina, is devoted to childhood safety issues.

Preventing Childhood Poisonings and Injuries

**Household Safety**

Each day in the United States, 374 children under age 19 are treated in emergency departments for poisonings. Children under six years of age are most likely to utilize emergency departments for medication poisonings. Poisonings in children due to prescription medications account for twice as many emergency room visits as household chemicals. A poison is defined by the American Association of Poison Control Centers as “any product or substance that can harm someone if it is used in the wrong way, by the wrong person, or in the wrong amount.”

The most common substances that cause childhood poisonings include household substances such as perfume and soap, cleaning products such as detergent, and over-the-counter pain medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), and topical creams used to treat rashes or acne. While these substances are among the most common causes of childhood poisonings, the most dangerous poisons include antifreeze, corrosive chemicals such as drain openers and oven cleaners, and fuels such as gasoline or oil for tiki-torches.

If a situation occurs that requires the assistance of a Poison Control Center, be prepared with the following information before you call: age and weight of the child, the container of the substance if available or known, and how much time has passed since exposure to the potential poison. The trained poison control expert will provide specific directions and guidance. Poison Control Centers are located in most states, as shown on the map below. In North Carolina, services are provided through the Carolinas Poison Center in Charlotte.

**Outdoor Safety**

Childhood safety also extends beyond the front door of your home. Unintentional injuries, including swimming pool and playground related injuries, are the most common cause of death in children under the age of 19. Drowning is the most common cause of injury-related death in children aged one to four, and over 200,000 children under age 14 are treated for playground-related injuries in emergency departments in the United States each year. Falls are the most common cause of non-fatal injuries in children under the age of 19. Many injuries due to drowning and falls are preventable.

10 Tips for Keeping Children Safe Inside and Outside the Home
1. Know who and when to call.¹
   - The number to reach the nationwide poison control center is **1-800-222-1222**. Keep this number by each phone in your home and programmed into your mobile device.
   - This service is accessible 24/7, with assistance provided in both English and Spanish. Call immediately if you suspect a poisoning, even if the child does not look or act sick. If the child is not breathing or unresponsive, call 911 as soon as possible.

2. Store smart.¹,⁴
   - Store all toxic products, including prescription and over the counter medications, in childproof cabinets. Purchase products with childproof lids whenever possible.
   - Avoid keeping potentially poisonous substances, including medication, in a purse or backpack where children can find it.
   - Potentially toxic products should be kept in the original containers. They should never be stored in food storage containers or cups.

3. Keep only what you need.¹,⁴
   - Unused, unnecessary, or expired medications should be properly disposed of. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) generally recommends mixing medication with coffee grounds or kitty litter prior to disposal. For specific recommendations, always consult your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

4. Identify yard hazards.⁴
   - Some plants that commonly grow in yards may be potentially toxic to children. These should be identified and removed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has online resources to assist with this process. Visit [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/plants/#plant](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/plants/#plant).

5. Make home improvements.⁵,⁶
   - Surround pools with four-sided fences with self-closing and self-latching gates.
   - Install safety devices such as stair gates and guard rails to prevent falls.

6. Wear life jackets.⁵
   - Children should always wear life jackets in lakes or the ocean, even if they already know how to swim.

7. Play it safe.⁶
   - Ensure safety and maintenance of playground equipment.
   - Children should always wear protective equipment such as helmets and knee pads when playing active sports.

8. Be vigilant.¹,⁴
   - When supervising young children, avoid distractions such as card games, reading, or talking on the phone.
   - Supervise young children at all times around potential fall hazards, such as stairs or playground equipment.

9. Become CPR certified.¹
   - CPR can help save a child's life in the event of an emergency. Recertification is required every two years. Training and recertification courses are offered through local hospitals, the American Red Cross, and the American Heart Association.

10. Educate yourself.
    - The American Association of Poison Control Centers, Food and Drug Administration, and CDC offer many valuable online resources for parents and caregivers. Logon to [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org), [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov), or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) to learn more.

References: