



American Association of Poison Control Centers

NEWS RELEASE

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Poison Centers Say Keep Medicated Patches Away From Children

ALEXANDRIA, VA – Transdermal patches that deliver medicines can pose a danger to children if not handled or disposed of properly, according to medical experts at America’s 57 poison centers.

Transdermal patches are adhesive pads placed on the skin that deliver timed-release doses of medicine into the bloodstream. Drugs such as nicotine replacement, nitroglycerin and powerful painkillers like lidocaine and fentanyl are available in medicated patches and can be poisonous to children.

In order to release the medicine consistently, patches contain as much as 20 to 30 times the amount that will be absorbed by the skin. When they are removed, some patches still contain as much as 95 percent of the total amount of the drug originally in the patch. The combination of a powerful drug and the large amount needed to be effective makes them dangerous for children.

“Children not only can choke on patches if they swallow them, but they also can overdose from the large amounts of drug that remain in used patches,” said Donna Seger, medical director for the Tennessee Poison Center. “They even can get large amounts of the drug into their systems just by licking, sucking or holding the patches in their hands. That’s why it’s so important that parents and caregivers keep medicated patches out of the reach of children and dispose of them safely after they are used.”

The following are examples of calls to poison centers about children who have become ill from medicated patches:

- A family member threw away a patch used to treat high blood pressure. A child pulled it out of the trash and chewed and sucked on it, causing severe drowsiness and a slow heartbeat. The child required treatment in the hospital.

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- A child pulled a patch off his father’s arm. The father didn’t realize it had happened until the child became ill. The child required medical treatment.
- A child accidentally stepped on a motion-sickness patch that a family member thought he had tossed in the trash but that had landed adhesive-side up on the floor instead. The child developed a racing heartbeat, dizziness and hallucinations and was hospitalized.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers recommends the following steps to keep children safe from medicated patches:

- Always keep medicines locked up and out of the reach of children.
- If the patch comes off your skin and accidentally sticks to the skin of another person, remove the patch from his or her skin immediately, wash the skin with water, and call your local poison center right away.
- Follow the specific disposal instructions on the drug label or patient information that you received with the medicine. In general –
 - Fold the patches in half with the adhesive inside.
 - Place folded patches into a sealed container out of the reach of children. Empty the sealed container into the trash as it leaves the house on garbage day.
 - Do not throw away patches that contain powerful pain narcotics like fentanyl. Instead, they should be folded and flushed down the toilet.
- If you think a child has been exposed to a medicated patch, call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately.

“I can’t stress enough how dangerous many patches are for children,” Seger said. “Even the nicotine patches that you can buy over the counter can poison children. Always take the time to ensure you handle and dispose of medicated patches carefully and safely.”

For more information, the media may contact Loreeta Canton, communications manager, American Association of Poison Control Centers, at 703.894.1863 or canton@aapcc.org.

About the American Association of Poison Control Centers:

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation’s 57 poison centers in their efforts to treat and prevent poisoning. Poison centers offer free, private, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The poison specialists take calls in more than 150 languages and from people who are hearing impaired.

If you have questions about poisons, or if you believe you’ve been exposed to something that could be bad for you, call your poison center at 1-800-222-1222.