



Children Act Fast, So Do Poisons!

Poison prevention curriculum for children in pre-K-3rd grade

Created by North Carolina Poison Control

OBJECTIVES:

- Provide early childhood educators with free poison prevention curriculum that affirms National Health Education Standards (NHES) for children pre-K through 3rd graders.
- Support early childhood educators with free online resources and public education materials.

In this curriculum, children will learn: (1) what a poison is, (2) how to avoid poisons, (3) what to do in the event of a poisoning, (4) how to recognize the Poison Help logo as an important “safety sign,” and (5) how to incorporate poison-safe behaviors at home.

PROGRAM OUTLINE:

- I. What is a poison?
- II. Poison display/Look-a-likes
- III. Case studies
- IV. Spike’s Poison Prevention Adventure
- V. Safety signs
- VI. Poison prevention games
- VII. Take-home material

I. What is a poison?

[NHES Standard 1: "Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion..."]

Teacher's Narrative:

A poison is something that if you eat, smell, taste, or touch, can make you sick or even kill you. Poisons can be found inside and outside. Always ask a grown-up first before you eat or drink something new. **If you don't know what it is, stay away!** Poisons come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes poisons can be things we see or use everyday.

Poisons can be:

- cleaners or other products adults use in the house, yard, or garage.
- medicines you take, if it's the wrong kind or too much.
- things you might find in your parents' or grandparents' medicine cabinet.
- things you might find underneath a sink or cabinet.
- plants, or berries from a plant, or mushrooms.

Inside poisons should always be kept locked up when not in use. Tell a grown-up right away if you see a poison sitting out that should be put away.

II. Poison Display/Look-a-likes

Using actual items in a display may make the concept of poisons become more real for children. Suggested items for display are included in the participant pack that accompanies this curriculum. Look-a-like posters are also included and should be printed in color.

The main points of discussion in this session are:

- candy and medicine look-a-like.
- do not call medicine candy.
- many household cleaners are colorful and look like juices. Younger children should always ask an adult before getting something to drink or eat.

III. Case Studies

[NHES Standard 5: "Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health."]

Read the following 4 examples and ask children the questions that complete each story.

Thomas and the look-a-like drink

It was time for dinner one night when Thomas' mom called the family to eat. They were having spaghetti and meatballs for dinner, Thomas' favorite. He was also having his favorite drink: apple juice.

Everyone was enjoying the meal and telling about what happened during the day when the phone rang. Thomas' mom answered the phone. While she was talking, Thomas had finished his apple juice and got up to find some more.

There was a bottle on the counter that had been sitting out since Thomas' mom had been cleaning the house the day before. It looked like apple juice, so he poured some in his glass.

Right before Thomas drank it, he heard his mom shout out, "Thomas, don't drink that!" He put the glass down right away.

Questions:

- (1) Why did Thomas' mom stop him from drinking what was in his glass?
- (2) What should Thomas have done first instead?

Thomas' mom yelled "Stop!" because Thomas did not follow an important safety rule: **Ask before you taste or touch.** Thomas' mom was able to catch Thomas before he drank the cleaning fluid. Drinking cleaners can make you very sick. Even though it looked good, Thomas should have waited for his mom to pour him another glass.

Jenny and Selena's tea party

Selena and Jenny were outside having a tea party with their favorite dolls. Selena's doll was having some extra sugar in her tea. Jenny's doll wanted to let her tea cool down before she drank it. The girls decided that while the tea was cooling, they would grab a snack. They were really getting hungry like their dolls!

Jenny found some pretty berries that would be just small enough to put on their plates. They were so bright, and they looked like they tasted really good. Jenny had gone berry picking with her cousins before, and these berries were the same color as strawberries.

Selena told Jenny, "I don't think we should eat these. What if they're not good for us?"

Jenny thought the berries were ok to eat because she's seen lots of grown-ups eat berries before. She started to pick a handful.

Questions:

- (1) Do you think Jenny should eat the berries?
- (2) Is it ever safe to eat any plants, berries, mushrooms, or flowers that you find outside?

Selena remembered the important safety rule, but Jenny didn't: **Ask before you taste or touch.** Some plants have pretty berries on them that look good to eat, but they may be poisonous. We should never pick mushrooms, plants, or berries and eat them. They might make us sick. Remember the important safety rule: **Ask before you taste or touch.**

Teacher's Note: North Carolina Poison Control's website, www.NCPoisonControl.org, has pictures of some potentially poisonous plants native to North Carolina. Click on the *Types of Poisons* circle and then *Plant and Mushrooms/Poisonous Plants* to view the pictures.

Darius and the medicine

This next story is a story about a brother and sister. Do any of you have brothers or sisters? This story is about Darius and Tasha. Darius' sister, Tasha, got sick one day. Darius' dad took Tasha to the doctor. The doctor gave Tasha's dad some medicine to give to Tasha to help her feel better.

When they got home, Tasha did not want to take the medicine because she thought it would taste badly. Darius' dad told Tasha, "It's good for you. You need to take it."

Tasha told Darius she was going to pretend it was candy, so maybe it wouldn't taste so bad. She took 2 of the pills, and said, "That wasn't so bad after all!"

After a little while, Tasha started feeling much better. The next day, Darius thought that since his sister liked the way the medicine tasted, and it made her feel better, that he would take some with him on the school bus to share with his friends. They could pretend it was candy, too. Besides, Darius' dad said it was good for his sister. It must be good for him, too.

Questions:

- (1) Was the medicine good for Darius just like it was for Tasha?
- (2) Do you think Darius and Tasha should have pretended that the medicine was candy?
- (3) What is the important safety rule we should remember?

NEVER take someone else's medicine, even if it is another family member's. Only take medicine that your mom or dad, or another trusted grown-up gives you. You can get sick if you take medicine not meant for you. Even though medicine might look like candy, it's not safe to pretend that it's candy. It's best to remember the important safety rule: **Ask before you taste or touch.**

Brian's adventure

Brian and his friends liked to play outside after school. Sometimes they liked to build towers out of rocks and then smash them down. Sometimes they played hide and seek.

Sometimes they'd collect bugs and other insects and compare what they caught with each other.

Brian got bored of finding grasshoppers and snails. While he was searching for something more fun to add to his collection, he saw something lying by his neighbor's garden hose at the side of the house. It was a snake! None of his friends had ever found a snake before. This would be the best thing Brian had ever found. His friends would love it, too!

He decided to try and grab it by the tail and take it back to their meeting place, so they could all check it out. The snake wasn't very big, and Brian thought he could catch it, if he used his fast hands and snuck up on it.

Questions:

- (1) Was it a good idea for Brian to try and catch the snake?
- (2) Is it ok to touch some snakes if you think you know what kind they are?
- (3) What should you do if you see a snake?

Snakes can be poisonous, so you shouldn't touch them or try to catch them. In North Carolina, there are mainly 5 kinds of snakes that are poisonous. Here is a picture of a poisonous snake (*show picture of snake from participant pack*). Snakes are good at hiding. Sometimes you don't see them until you are very close to them. If you see a snake, back away slowly, then get an adult right away. Tell the adult where you saw the snake, but don't try to touch it. If you are bitten by a snake, tell an adult right away. Remembering the important safety rule, **Ask before you taste or touch**, will help you know to stay away from snakes.

IV. Spike's Poison Prevention Adventure (optional)

You may also view this 11-minute video by clicking on the link at the bottom of the "For Younger Children" education page.

V. Safety Signs

[NHES Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.]

Your participant pack includes pictures of some important "safety signs" that children may know. Show the signs to the children, and ask them to tell you what the signs mean and why they are important. The last "sign" is a picture of the Poison Help logo which provides the number to the poison control center. Younger children may not know how to read the words or the number, but they can begin to recognize that the Poison Help logo means "I can get help if I get sick from a poison" and to get an adult.

Teacher's Narrative:

(holding up the poison center logo)

Boys and girls, this symbol means that someone can help you right away if you've eaten or touched a poison. The phone number is to the poison control center. It's important for your mom or dad to have the number to the poison control center nearby in case they need to call. The people who answer the phones are people who know all about poisons. They will make sure that you get help. Mom or dad or another trusted adult should call right away if you or someone else has eaten, tasted, smelled, or touched a poison.

VI. Poison prevention games

[NHES Standard 7: "Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks."]

Refer to the participant pack for a variety of games and activities for both younger and older children. Pick one or two games or activities to complete together as a class. You may ask older children to complete the "homework" assignment listed on the suggested games/activities page.

Some of the games require review ahead of time as materials need to be gathered and in place to complete the activities.

VII. Take home material

[NHES Standard 8: "Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health."]

If ordered 4 weeks prior to poison prevention class, distribute poison prevention magnets or stickers to each child and letter to family. Tell students to remember their important safety rule: **ask before you taste or touch.**

To order free magnets, visit our online store at <http://www.NCPoisonControl.org> or call North Carolina Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222 to request them.