

Keeping Preschoolers Safe from Addictive, Toxic Substances

America is in the midst of an addiction epidemic, and dangerous drugs, including opioids, are more prevalent than ever before. This crisis has contributed to a rise in the number of children who have experienced serious consequences from coming in contact with toxic, addictive substances, ranging from dangerous, illicit drugs to food and drink items that may be relatively harmless to adults.

*Fortunately, there are things teachers and school administrators can do to stop these incidents from ever taking place. **It is never too late to protect children from the potentially life-threatening harms of addiction and addictive substances.***

Educate Parents and Other Caregivers

Most homes contain items considered “addictive and toxic.” Some of these items may not be harmful to adults when used properly. A doctor may have even prescribed some. Yet, they can still be dangerous for kids, especially children under the age of six. Parents may be unaware of how dangerous these products can be to children.

You have the opportunity to inform parents and other caregivers about the substances in their home that may pose a risk to young children.

Items caregivers should be aware of include:

- **Nicotine** like e-liquids used with e-cigarettes; nicotine gum or patches
- **Alcoholic beverages** like sweetened mixed drinks, beers, wine coolers and hard liquor
- **Caffeine** like coffee, tea, soft drinks, energy drinks and some snack foods like potato chips, candy bars and specialty water
- **Prescription medicines** like painkillers, tranquilizers and sedatives
- **Marijuana** like edibles in the form of baked goods, candy and beverages
- **Illegal drugs** like cocaine, psychedelic mushrooms, methamphetamine and heroin

The Youngest Victims of the Addiction Epidemic

Due to of America's current addiction crisis, dangerous drugs, including opioids, are more common than ever before. Children living in homes affected by addiction are more likely to encounter drugs, alcohol and nicotine products.

Parents and caretakers with addiction should seek treatment from a medical professional. To learn more, visit centeronaddiction.org/addiction-treatment.

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Educate Students

Inform preschoolers, in an age-appropriate way, to always ask a trustworthy adult before putting something in their mouth. Let them know, that even if it looks like a food or a drink item, or is something they've seen adults touching or putting in their mouths, it may not be safe for children. Remind children that if they do ever touch or eat something and begin to feel sick or strange, to tell an adult immediately and be honest about what happened.

Know the Symptoms

Each preschooler may react differently after touching or eating an addictive, toxic substance, but some common symptoms to look out for include:

- Tiredness
- Headache
- Slurred speech
- Stomach pain
- Nausea
- Throwing up
- Rapid heart rate
- Trouble breathing
- High body temperature
- Hallucinations
- Seizures
- Not responding
- Coma
- In extreme cases, death

Be Safe, NOT Sorry



Save the phone number for the national Poison Help Hotline in your phone: call 1-800-222-1222 or text POISON to 797979. The nation's poison control centers are available to help 24/7/365. All calls are answered by local poison control specialists and are confidential.

For more information and tips on what parents can do to protect children from the harms of substance use and addiction, visit centeronaddiction.org and aapcc.org

