

# A Teacher's Guide to Poison Prevention



Lesson Plans and Activity Ideas for Poison Prevention  
in the Classroom

Provided by the:

**WASHINGTON**  
**POISON**  
**CENTER**   
**1-800-222-1222**



# Table of Contents

## Introduction

Background: About the Washington Poison Center	3
Goals of Classroom Education Program	4
Poison Facts: Why Provide a Poison Education?	4
What is a Poison?	5

## Tools for Teaching

Mr. Yuk	6
The Yuk Box	7
Look-Alike Products	8
Adventures with Spike	9
Suggested Reading List: A Poisonous Selection	11
Poison Prevention Week (PPW)	12
PPW Poster Contest & Lesson Plan	12

## Lesson Plans & Activity Ideas for Early Elementary

Lesson 1: What are Poisons?	15
Lesson 2: What do Poisons Look and Smell Like?	22
Lesson 3: Safe Use of Medicine and Vitamins	27

## Lesson Plans & Activity Ideas for Mid- to Late-Elementary

Lesson 4: Poison Investigator	29
Lesson 5: Product Directions	31

## Take-Home Letters

Letter from Washington Poison Center	32
Checklist back to Teacher	33
Poison Checklist Handout	34

Wheel of Ideas for Teenage Students	35
-------------------------------------	----

Evaluation	36
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Acknowledgements	37
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# Introduction

## **Background: About the Washington Poison Center**

The Washington Poison Center (WAPC) is a statewide provider of immediate, free, and expert treatment advice and assistance on the telephone in the case of exposure to poisonous, hazardous, or toxic substances.

**The WAPC is accessible toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.**

Pharmacists, nurses, and poison information providers answer the phones. Calling can prevent a trip to the emergency room. In 2000, the WAPC helped avert over 50,000 trips to Emergency Departments and Urgent Care Units by helping people over the telephone. The National Poison Help Line at **1-800-222-1222** is **FAST, FREE, and PRIVATE.**

**We are here for everyone, day and night...**

We serve all Washingtonians - children, the elderly, adults, even pets (a \$30 credit card fee applies *only* for pet calls). We have access to more than 170 languages (Language Line), and TTY relay (7-1-1) for the hearing impaired. We serve over 80,000 callers each year. We are always open - even on holidays!

**We are free and confidential...**

All calls are kept confidential within the limits of the law. We do not report names or even question the reluctant caller. We are not a reporting agency; we are just here to help.

**We are the experts the experts call...**

Our phones are staffed by medical professionals, including pharmacists and nurses. Over 17% of our calls come from other health care professionals. We utilize one of the most up-to-date chemical databases in the nation (including occupational, homeopathic, and naturopathic substances). We even help train future health professionals!

**We help reduce health care costs...**

Over 93% of our cases from non-health care facilities can be managed over the telephone by the Washington Poison Center staff, reducing unnecessary and expensive visits to the emergency department or to physicians' offices. According to the Washington State Department of Health, every \$1 spent on a the poison center saves an estimated \$175 in overall health care costs. We even research new methods and techniques to prevent and treat poisonings!

**We are a non-profit organization...**

Public funding only covers a portion of our expenses. We continue to rely on community support to keep our phones staffed.

## **Goals of the WAPC Classroom Education Program**

The WAPC has created this educational guide in order to:

- Increase awareness of the existence, purpose, and phone number of the Washington Poison Center among students of all ages.
- Increase knowledge of which products can be poisonous.
- Increase knowledge of poison prevention measures that can be taken (even by children), to reduce the risk of accidental poisonings.

### **POISON FACTS: Why Provide Poison Education**

- Poisonings are the leading cause of accidental deaths in Washington, surpassing car crashes and falls.
- Every 13 seconds in the United States a poison center receives a call about an unintentional poisoning.
- Ninety-three percent of poisonings happen in the home.
- The WAPC responded to just over 85,000 emergencies or requests for assistance in the year 2009.
- Ninety-three percent of calls to the WAPC from non-health care facilities are kept at home with poison center staff managing care through via the telephone.
- Almost 56% of exposure calls are regarding children under the age of six, of those 46% are poisoned by medications.
- Child-resistant packaging is not childproof. Most two-year-olds can open a child-resistant container in 4 to 5 minutes.
- About 3 out of 5 cases involve non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleansers, personal care products, plants, pesticides, art supplies, alcohol, and toys.
- Calling 1-800-222-1222 from anywhere in the United States will connect you to the local Poison Center from anywhere in the United States – calling from Washington State will get you the Washington Poison Center.
- Most poisonings are unintentional – they CAN be prevented! It's easier and cheaper to prevent poisonings than to treat a person who has been poisoned.
- For more poison facts go to: [http://www.wapc.org/resources/wapc\\_resources.htm](http://www.wapc.org/resources/wapc_resources.htm)

## What is a Poison?

Any chemical or substance can kill or cause illness if you:

- **Eat it**
- **Drink it**
- **Breathe it**
- **Get it on your skin, or**
- **In your eyes**



Many household products and plants are poisonous. Children, older people, and pets are most at risk—but people of all ages can get poisoned! The Poison Center also receives calls about food poisoning; insect, spider, tick, and snakebites; carbon monoxide; lead; pesticides; rabies and animal bites.

It is important to know that poisons can come in many forms:

- Solids—includes powders, granules, plants, berries, mushrooms, and medicines
- Liquids—all colors and thicknesses (watery, syrupy, pasty), and in many types of containers
- Sprays—aerosol cans such as hair spray and furniture polish
- Invisible Gases—such as fumes from a car's muffler or a fire

Almost any substance can become a poison when used improperly or in excessive amounts. ***It's the Dose that Makes the Poison!*** As a teacher, you know children are naturally curious, as it is their way of learning about the world around them. Young children, by their nature, put almost everything they see and touch in the mouth, even if it doesn't smell or taste good.

# Tools For Teaching

## **Mr. Yuk**



The Mr. Yuk symbol was developed in 1971 by the [Pittsburgh Poison Center of Children's Hospital](#). It is copyrighted exclusively for teaching prevention education through affiliated hospitals and poison centers.

Research conducted early in 1971 indicated that the old skull and crossbones used in the past to identify poisons had little meaning for the children of the 1970's. The old symbol had been exploited in movies, cartoons, commercial products, and amusement parks to denote happy, exciting things like pirates and adventure. The Pittsburgh Pirates used the symbol as its team logo.

In a university-conducted testing program, children at daycare centers were shown symbols which were affixed to identical bottles of mouthwash often found in family homes. The symbols included a red stop sign, the skull and crossbones, and four others.

At the beginning of the test, each child was told that he might find bottles like these at home and was asked to identify any bottle he might not want to play with.

The symbol that proved to be least attractive to the children was Mr. Yuk.

Researchers found it interesting that the most popular symbol to the children was in fact, the skull and crossbones.

One little boy declined to pick up a bottle marked with the green, scowling-faced symbol, because he said, "he looks yucky." And so children not only selected Mr. Yuk as a poison warning symbol, but one child named him as well.

In 1973 the Washington Poison Center, which was then the Seattle Poison Center at Children's Hospital in Seattle, became the first poison program outside of Pittsburgh to adopt Mr. Yuk as its poison warning symbol.

Realizing that any symbol must be taught to be effective, poison centers emphasize education and awareness to teach both adults and children about the hazards of toxic products in the home and environment. Mr. Yuk stickers are really for adults – to remind them a product with the sticker needs to be used and stored safely. The Mr. Yuk sticker has the national toll-free phone number for poison centers – so the number is handy when an exposure to the product occurs.

Mr. Yuk stickers are available at selected pharmacies and at the WAPC by calling, **1-800-222-1222**. For large quantities of Mr. Yuk stickers or other Washington Poison Center materials, download an order form at: <http://www.wapc.org/educators/materials.htm>.

Listen to the Mr. Yuk song at [http://www.wapc.org/media/mryuk\\_web%5B1%5D.mp3](http://www.wapc.org/media/mryuk_web%5B1%5D.mp3)

## The Yuk Box

***What is The Yuk Box?*** It is a box filled with educational materials to teach poison prevention messages to both adults and children. There are currently nine boxes available for public use, located throughout Washington State.

***What's in the box?*** There are several resources in the box. Some of the materials are great for fairs and presentations, while others are better suited for classroom learning and projects. Either way, there is something for everyone. Here is a list of a few things you will find in the boxes:

**Look-Alikes:** food and other items with very similar packaging that can easily be mistaken for one another. Examples include apple juice and wood cleaner, eye drops and ear drops, mayonnaise and multi-surface cleanser, and hemorrhoidal ointment and tooth paste.

**Medicine Cabinet Display:** a display shaped like a bathroom mirror medicine cabinet, when opened, contains a number of colorful and enticing medications, and candies that look-alike. It demonstrates how children, and even adults, can mistake medications for candy.

**Videos:** an assortment ranging from cartoons for pre-schoolers, to adult education videos on poison-proofing your home before the baby comes. The videos are in English and/or Spanish.

Additionally, there are sample handouts (which you can call the poison center to order or download for free off the website), a guide on how to teach poison prevention messages to a variety of age groups, and a list of possible activities to facilitate.

***Who can use the boxes?*** Educators, program managers, teachers, parent groups, safety coordinators, and others can use the box for health and safety fairs, teaching classes, presentations to children and parent groups, and adult education. Visit <http://www.wapc.org/educators/materials.htm> to learn more. Call or email: 206-517-2350 or [materials@wapc.org](mailto:materials@wapc.org) to see if there is a Yuk Box near you.

## Look-Alike Products

Poisons are tricky. They can look like things that are good to eat or drink. For many of these lessons, it will be valuable for you to create a small sample of look-alikes for your classroom.

**Note:** *The Yuk Box* contains real product look-alikes. A Mistaken Identity (Look-Alike) Poster is available to order at <http://www.wapc.org/educators/materials.htm>.

Refer to the lesson, “What do Poisons Look and Smell Like?” for specific discussions about look-alikes.

Below is a sample of a few products that you might like to collect, or have photos of, for your classroom look-alike display:

### Poisonous Household Products

Cleanser (green can)  
Lamp Oil  
Mothballs  
Pine Cleaner  
Cold Preparation (red)  
Dishwashing Liquid  
(with picture of lemon)

### Non-Poisonous Food Item

Grated Cheese  
Cranberry Juice  
Mini-Marshmallows  
Apple Juice  
Red Hot Candy  
Lemon Juice

For a longer list of items, visit: <http://www.nccc.org/Health/look-alike.html>

## Adventures with Spike

**Spike's Preschool Poison Prevention Video/Kit**, produced by the American Association of Poison Control Center's can be found in the Yuk Box or ordered through the Washington Poison Center. Find a link online to view the video at: <http://www.wapc.org/educators/materials.htm>

**Spike's Poison Prevention Adventure** is about a porcupine named Spike whose quills go up when he is near poison.

You will notice that Mr. Yuk is not in the video. Not all the poison centers in the United States use Mr. Yuk – the Washington Poison Center does and will continue to promote the use of Mr. Yuk. One way to help tie Mr. Yuk to Spike is to first show the video and then follow-up with the question, “since we don't have quills of our own, how do we know to stay away?” – a perfect opportunity to introduce Mr. Yuk.

Most children under five cannot read so they do not understand warning labels on household products and they do not recognize written words such as poison, danger, harmful, etc. The following is an outline of a poison safety lesson combining **Spike's Poison Prevention Adventure and Mr. Yuk** designed specifically for preschool children. This lesson will make children aware of poisonous substances, introduce them to Mr. Yuk and teach them to always ask their parents or caregiver before putting something into their mouths.

### A. Introduction to poisons (10 minutes)

1. **Define poison/poisonous** – things that could make you sick
2. **Solids:** Show pictures of poisons that would be harmful if eaten (medicine, vitamins, wild mushrooms, berries, plants, flowers, cigarettes, mothballs, etc.)
3. **Liquids:** Show pictures of poisons that would be harmful if swallowed (mouthwash, windshield washer fluid, rubbing alcohol, alcoholic beverages, kerosene/gasoline, glue, etc.)
4. **Sprays:** Show pictures of poisons that would be harmful if accidentally sprayed in the face or on the skin (perfume/cologne, furniture polish, air freshener, hairspray, bug spray, etc.)

### B. Spike's Poison Prevention Adventure (15 minutes)

1. Follow the Step-by-Step guidelines found on page 5 of Spike's Poison Prevention Adventure Teacher's Guide to introduce your class to Spike.
2. Have the children make their Spike puppet to use while watching the video and for a later activity (page 6 of Spike's Teacher's Guide).
3. Watch the video.

### **C. Introduction to Mr. Yuk (5 minutes)**

1. Ask your class, “since we don’t have quills of our own, how do we know to stay away?”
2. Show pictures of Mr. Yuk and explain that Mr. Yuk is a symbol of poison and to stay away from all poisons.
3. Show the Mr. Yuk stickers and explain that when the children go home with the stickers, they should give them to their parents/caregivers, and that the stickers go on the poisonous products in the home.

*Please emphasize to the children that Mr. Yuk may not be on all the poisonous products in the home or on the poisonous things outside, and that they should always remember to stay away from all poisons, whether or not the Mr. Yuk sticker is on the poisonous item.*

### **D. Game (10 minutes)**

1. Have a bag or box filled with various poisonous products that would be dangerous to eat, drink, or spray in the face or on the skin. Put a Mr. Yuk sticker on each poisonous item.
2. In the same bag or box put various items that are good to eat or drink (fruit, cereal, juice, etc.).
3. As you show each item to the children, have them raise their Spike puppets and say, “**STAY AWAY**” if it is poisonous. If the item is good for them, have them put Spike down on the floor.

*Reinforce that Mr. Yuk means poison by showing the Mr. Yuk sticker on the poisonous products.*

### **E. Song (5 minutes)**

1. Teach the children Spike’s “Stay Away Song” on page 7 of Spike’s Teacher’s Guide
2. Add a third verse:  
If you see Mr. Yuk,  
Stay away! (*clap clap*)  
If you see Mr. Yuk,  
Stay away! (*clap clap*)  
If you see Mr. Yuk,  
Find a grown-up right away.  
If you see Mr. Yuk,  
Stay away! (*clap clap*)

## Suggested Reading List: A Poisonous Selection

### **Clifford's Spring Clean-up** by Norman Bridwell. Fiction. Ages 3-8

Watch out, it's spring cleaning time, Clifford style. Although Clifford uses his tongue to clean windows, a discussion about types of cleaners the mother probably uses, where she keeps them, and how to use them and stay safe could start here. The book ends on an Earth Day message that could easily be changed to discuss National Poison Prevention Week.

### **Hog-Eye** by Susan Meddaugh. Fiction. Ages 4-8

A little piggy gets caught by a big, bad wolf that makes plans for a tasty pig stew. Luckily, this is a resourceful little piggy who figures out the wolf cannot read, and uses this to her advantage. You'll have to read the book to find out how poison ivy saves the day. While in real life, wolves don't own cookbooks and pigs don't talk, children do encourage each other to do things they shouldn't, like roll around in poison ivy. A discussion about what to do in that situation might be interesting.

### **The Kid's Guide to First Aid** by Karen Buhler. Nonfiction. Ages 5-10

This book covers a wide range of situations needing first aid, including insect bites, stings, and poison ivy. Poison is specifically addressed on pages 99-103 with facts, first aid recommendations, and activities.

### **Let's Talk About Poison Ivy** by Melanie Apel Gordon. Nonfiction. Ages 4-8

If you are planning a camping trip, or just plain curious, this book discusses how to identify poison ivy, how to prevent getting a rash, how the rash looks and feels, and how to best promote healing.

### **Little Yau: A Fuzzhead Tale** by Janell Cannon. Fiction. Ages 4-8

Little Yau's friend, Trau, has been poisoned and is very sick. With guidance from the elder Fuzzheads, Little Yau goes on a search to find the plant that will create an antidote to save Trau's life. This story reinforces the idea that poisons can make you sick, and that it is important to seek help from adults to treat the sickness.

### **Poison! Beware!** By Steve Skidmore. Nonfiction. Ages 4-8

Humorous illustrations accompany information about substances which are harmful, including bacteria, plants, animals, and chemicals. Also instructs on what to do if someone does come into contact with poison.

### **Poisoning** by Alvin Silverstein. Nonfiction. Ages 4-8

For children who are, as the book says, "old enough to know it is dangerous to drink a bottle of cleaner." This book covers poisons found in the air, in foods, in animals and in plants. It teaches how to avoid poisons and provides first aid recommendations for treating someone who has been poisoned.

### **Snow White** Fiction.

There are many versions of this favorite fairy tale, but nearly all contain the poisoned apple. Disaster befalls Snow White when she does not follow the instructions of the trusted dwarves and eats the apple. A well-placed discussion here will reinforce the notion that poisons are not always in obvious packages. The message of "always ask first" could also be emphasized.

## Poison Prevention Week (PPW)

Every year the nation recognizes the 3rd week in March as, “[National Poison Prevention Week](#).” The Washington Poison Center urges all Washington citizens to use the week as a reminder to be cautious with poisons.

**Remember:** Poisonings are the leading cause of accidental deaths in Washington, surpassing car crashes and falls. Children, teens, adults, seniors, and pets are all at risk.

The goal of PPW is to reduce illnesses, injuries, and deaths due to poisonings; build safer communities; and reduce unnecessary health care costs.

For more on National Poison Prevention Week visit [www.poisonprevention.org](http://www.poisonprevention.org).

Visit: [http://www.wapc.org/educators\\_advocates.htm](http://www.wapc.org/educators_advocates.htm) for tips and information that may make Poison Prevention Week a success.

## PPW Poster Contest & Lesson Plan

The Washington Poison Center holds a Mr. Yuk PPW Poster Contest in which the winner’s poster is used for the coming year’s PPW Poster in Washington State. When sponsorship is obtained, the poster is also used on billboards throughout the State.

Contest rules may vary year to year. Please check our website: <http://www.wapc.org/educators/ppw.htm> for contest information.

### Lesson Plan for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders

#### **NOTE TO TEACHERS**

Visit [www.wapc.org](http://www.wapc.org) for current poster contest rules and information.

*This lesson plan can be developed and modified to fit the needs of the classroom.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Bring students into a community circle or cluster on the floor. Use this time to discuss and define poisons.

A poison is something that can cause sickness or even death if ingested, inhaled, spilled on the skin, or splashed in the eyes. It comes in many forms such as solids, liquids, sprays, and invisible gases.

## EXPLORATION

Ask students where they think poisons can be found.  
-at home, school, outside, stores

As a class, make a list of rooms that can be found in a house. Brainstorm all the different poisons that can be found in each of these rooms. Here are some common examples that students may think of: cleaning solution, dishwashing liquid, mouthwash, bleach, medicine, ammonia, perfume, furniture polish, paints, etc.

## DEVELOPING SKILLS

Introduce Mr. Yuk to the students. Younger students may enjoy coloring a Mr. Yuk picture. Explain that Mr. Yuk means that they should stay away and ask an adult for assistance. Remind them that things can still be dangerous even when they do not see a Mr. Yuk sticker.



Use an empty container to talk about labels and the caution words they contain. Write a list of common caution words. Some examples of caution words are: caution, warning, beware, poison, fatal, flammable, toxic, harmful, danger, caustic, hazardous.

Read labels from many different household items and make a list of caution words. Discuss other ways to determine if something is a poison.

## CREATION

Students create posters advertising the dangers of poisons in an attempt to promote poison safety and awareness. Check the theme of this year's poster contest. Emphasize the importance of educating people about poison safety.

See Washington Poison Center's contest rules for more details.

## REFLECTION

After completion of the poster, allow students to take some time to reflect on the effectiveness of their poster. Choose a reflection method that is appropriate for the students' grade level. The following questions can be addressed:

- What is the message or purpose of your poster?
- Is this message easily understood by looking at your poster?
- What process did you use to create your poster?
- Do you think your poster will be an effective tool for poison prevention?
- What part of your poster makes you proud?
- What are you going to do with what you have learned about poisons?

## **EALRS (Essential Academic Learning Requirements)**

Writing	2-The student writes in a variety of forms for different audiences and purposes.
Communication	4-The student analyzes and evaluates the effectiveness of communications.
Arts	3-The student communicates through the arts.
Health Fitness	2-The student acquires knowledge and skills necessary to maintain a healthy life: recognize patterns of growth and development, reduce health risks, and live safely.

This list is very general and spans three grades. Specific GLEs (Grade Level Expectations) can be determined by the teacher depending on grade level and modification choices.

### **Suggested elements to be included in a student take home “Poison Pack”**

- Letter to parents
- Mr. Yuk Stickers
- A list of common look-alikes
- Home check list

All of these are available on Washington Poison Center’s website

### **Resources**

[www.wapc.org](http://www.wapc.org)

# Lesson Plans & Activity Ideas for Early Elementary

## **Lesson 1: What are Poisons?**

When You Don't Know—Ask Someone First

### **Objectives:**

- To define a poison as something that can make you sick and hurt you.
- To familiarize children with some common household poisons in order to prevent poisonings.
- To describe a poison as something that should not be played with, tasted, smelled, or touched before asking a parent or caregiver first.

### **Discussion:**

*What is a poison?* A poison is something that can make you sick if you take it, smell it, or get it on your skin or in your eye. We should never play with, touch, smell, or taste poisons.

Grown-ups sometimes use poisons to do things around the house, like cleaning and washing clothes. Poisons can be used to kill bugs, keep our cars running, and keep our yards looking nice. Even things we use to make us look and smell nice can be poisonous. For example: perfume, nail polish remover, and mouthwash can be poisonous. Even medicine and vitamins, if used in the wrong way, can be poisonous. Poisons are safe as long as they are used in the right way.

*Who can tell what some common poisons might be? Who can tell me where you might find a poison in or outside of your home?* Poisons can be found in almost every room in your house. They can be found in your kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living room, basement, attic, garage, and closet. They can also be found in your backyard, in the park, or on the playground.

### **Activity 1 for Lesson Plan 1**

#### ***Poison Investigator Activity***

**Description:** Children will search the room for poisons like a “poison investigator.”

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Poison Investigator Badge
- Grocery Bags (enough for one child)
- Pictures of poisons cut out of old magazines (highly recommended for younger age groups), or clean, empty poison containers (enough for each child)

*Examples:*

Medicine  
Floor cleaner  
Bathroom cleaner  
Dishwashing liquid  
Mouthwash  
Scouring powder/granular cleaner

Bleach  
Furniture polish  
Ammonia  
Window/glass cleaner  
Perfume/cologne

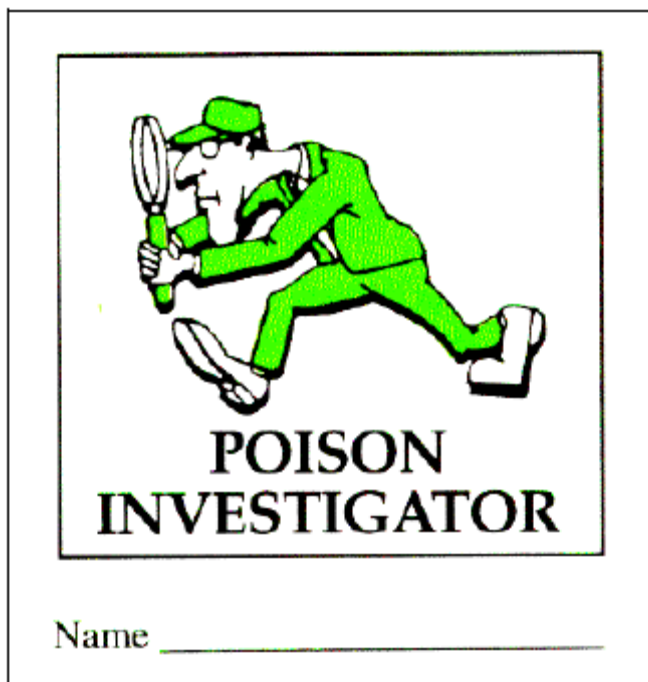
- Scissors and coloring tools (to make poison investigator badge)

**Preparation:**

- Photocopy the poison investigator badge, enough for each child, found after this lesson plan
- Distribute the badges, scissors, and coloring tools to the children
- Instruct children to color and cut out their badges
- Help children fasten the badges onto their clothing
- “Hide” the empty poison containers/pictures around the room
- Break the children up into pairs, and provide each pair with grocery bags

**Direction:**

Instruct two or three pairs at a time to see if they can find the hidden poisons. Each pair should find two poisons and then bring them back to their seats. After all the children have found their poisons, ask each child to describe the poison they found. Ask them what the poison is used for and where it may be found in the home.



## **Activity 2 for Lesson Plan 1**

### ***Mr. Yuk & Mr. Yummy***

#### **Materials:**

- 2 large brown paper bags
- Pictures of poisons cut out of magazines, or draw your own poison pictures
- Pictures of good food to eat
- A large green unhappy face—Mr. Yuk (see following pages)
- A large yellow happy face—Mr. Yummy (see following pages)

#### **Preparation:**

- Attach the Mr. Yummy happy face on one of the larger paper bags. Attach the Mr. Yuk unhappy face on the other.
- Cut out the pictures from a magazine or make your own pictures of poisons.

#### **Instruction:**

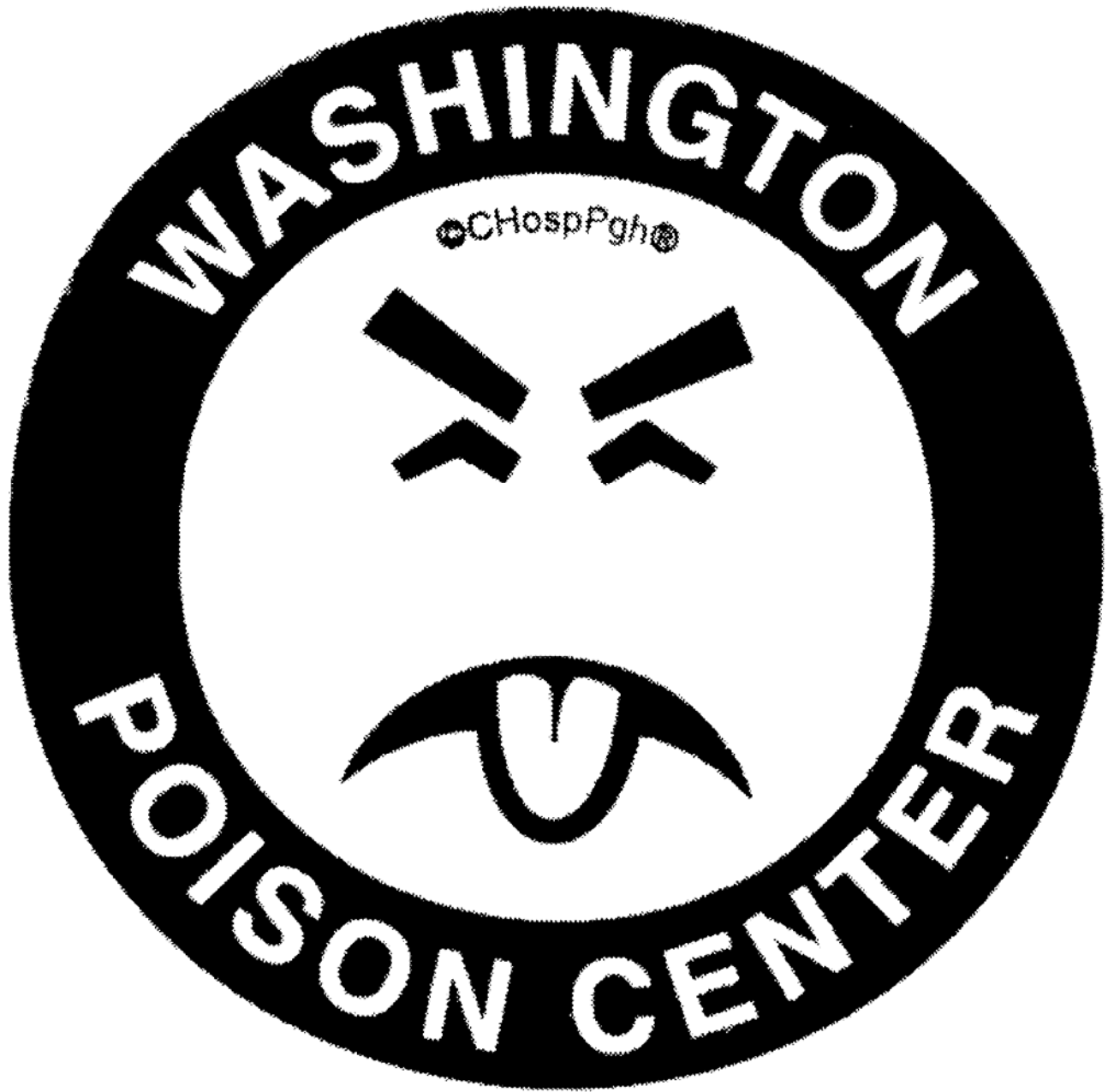
Hold the picture up and ask the children to determine if it is a poison, or not. This can be tricky and may need to be explained. For example, toothpaste is OK to brush your teeth with, but you don't want to eat toothpaste. You should spit it out.

Have the children take turns putting the poisons in the Mr. Yuk bag, and the food that is OK to eat or drink in the Mr. Yummy bag.

#### ***Alternative:***

If you have not previously done the Poison Investigator Game (see Activity 1 for Lesson 1), students can search for poisons and non-poisons around the room before determining which bag to put each item in.

Instead of placing Mr. Yuk and Mr. Yummy on paper bags, try placing them on butcher paper so that the children can tape pictures of the poisons and non-poisons on the butcher paper next to the appropriate face.



**Mr. Yuk**  
**COLOR ME GREEN!**



**Mr. Yummy  
COLOR ME YELLOW!**

### **Activity 3 for Lesson Plan 1**

#### ***Mr. Yuk the Poisons***

##### **Materials:**

- Mr. Yuk the Poisons Worksheet
- Markers, crayons or Mr. Yuk stickers

##### **Preparation:**

- Make copies of the Mr. Yuk the Poisons worksheet.

##### **Instruction:**

Ask children to identify the images on the Mr. Yuk the Poisons worksheet. Draw the Mr. Yuk symbol on the items not okay to touch or eat. Color in the items that are safe.

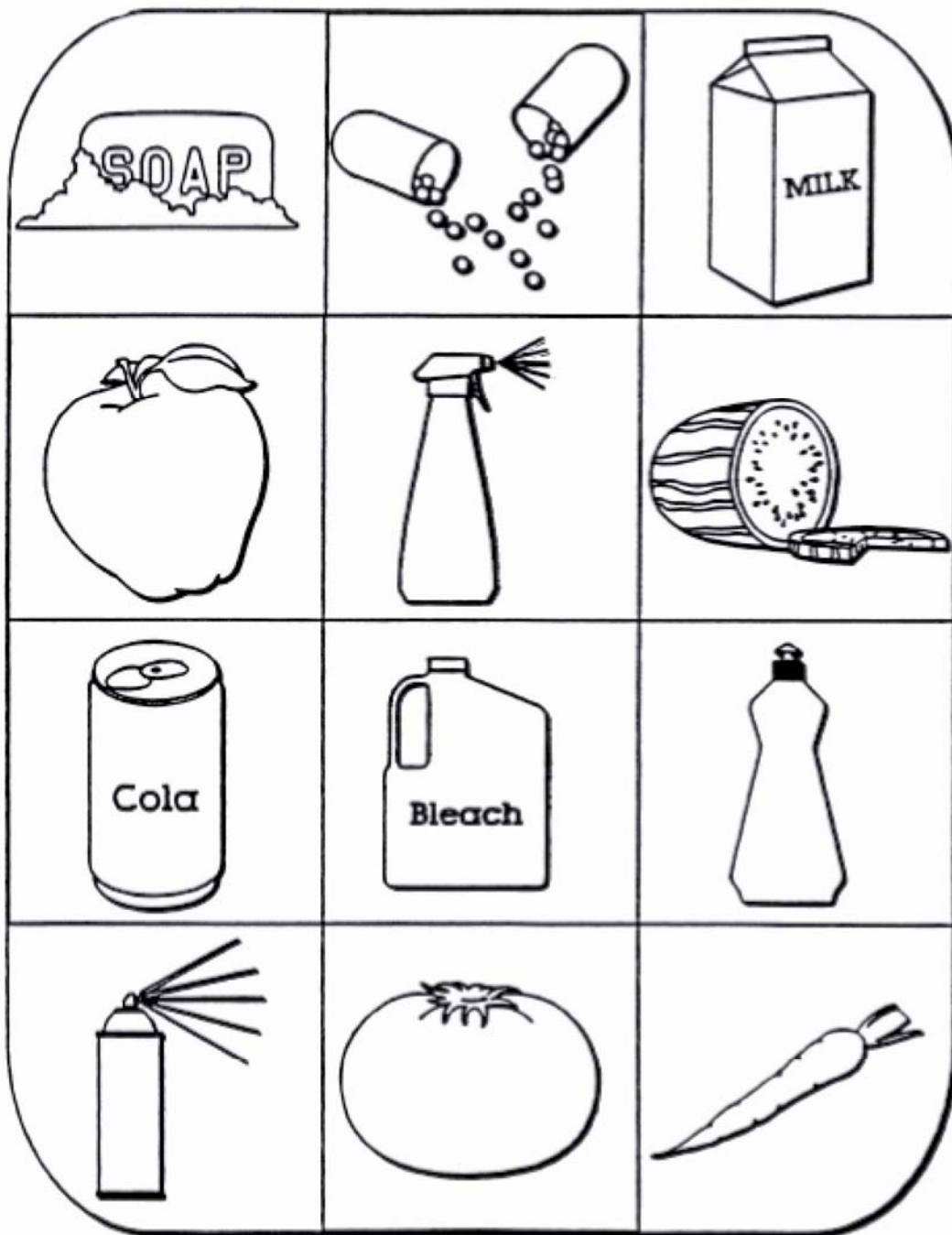
##### ***Alternative:***

Stick a Mr. Yuk sticker on or draw an X over the items not okay to touch or eat (if drawing Mr. Yuk is too difficult for the child).



Color those pictures that are safe to taste.

Draw Mr. Yuk over the pictures that are not safe to taste.



## Lesson 2: What do Poisons Look and Smell Like?

### Objectives:

The children will be able to:

- Explain that poisons can sometimes look and smell like things that are good to eat and drink.
- Explain the importance of always asking first before eating or drinking something.
- Explain who can give medicine.

### Materials:

- Chairs
- Music and tape player
- Several look-alikes – Examples:
  - Pine-Sol\* and Apple juice
  - Comet\* and Parmesan Cheese
  - Murphy's Oil Soap\* & Gatorade
  - Grape flavored cough syrup and Grape juice
  - Blue Windex\* and Blue Power Aid\*

[\*Indicates Trademark. These items were chosen for illustrative purposes only. The Washington Poison Center does not intend to imply that these items are dangerous if used as directed on the label.]

**Keep all poisons locked up when not in use. Never leave poisons out unsupervised!**

### Discussion:

Poisons are tricky. They can look like things that are good to eat or drink. They can look like our favorite drinks and good things we eat.

*Show and explain the look-alikes.*

Poisons can come in all shapes, sizes, and pretty colors. Poisons can be solids, like a pill or plant, or they can be liquids like some cleaning supplies. Some poisons come in spray bottles.

Other poisons can be gases, which we cannot see. How many of you have ever heard about carbon monoxide? It is poisonous gas that we cannot see.

**Medicines can even look and taste like our favorite candy. *Who should you take medicine from?* A trusted adult, mom, dad, etc., never take medicine, or any kind of pills, or “candy,” from a stranger. Always ask before eating or drinking something, even if it looks good to eat or drink.**

## **Activity 1 for Lesson Plan 2**

### ***Poison Musical Chairs***

#### **Description:**

This lesson is a lively version of “Musical Chairs” where children march on a path of poisonous and non-poisonous products.

#### **Preparation:**

Find pictures of poisonous and non-poisonous items in old magazines, or draw and make your own pictures of poisons. Examples might include pictures of nail polish remover, a gasoline can, a paint can, mouthwash, bleach bottle, ammonia bottle, a prescription bottle, toilet bowl cleaner, glass cleaner, a hotdog, rat poison, cherries, a cake, a hamburger, a plant, or a soda can.

Randomly tape one picture on the seat of each chair. Arrange the chairs in a circle.

#### **Instruction:**

Instruct the children to sit down on a chair. When the music starts they can begin marching around the chairs. When the music stops, the children should sit down in a chair. Children sitting on a picture of a poison when the music stops must take the picture from their chair, and are then out of the game. Remove the chair from the circle. Children sitting on a non-poison picture should continue to play the game. The game ends when all of the poison pictures and their chairs have been removed, at this point, all children should sit in their seats. Discuss the definition of poison and stress the importance of not playing with, touching or tasting a poison.

Again, stress the importance of who can give them medicine.

## Activity 2 for Lesson Plan 2

### *Billy's Birthday*

#### **Materials:**

Billy's Birthday story  
"Three Blind Mice" music  
Words to "We Ask First"

#### **Instruction:**

Read the story of "Billy's Birthday" to the children. Talk about situations where students have been taught about poisons. Go over the words of "We Ask First." Sing "We Ask First" to the tune of "Three Blind Mice."

### **Billy's Birthday**

It was an exciting day at Jessica's house. It was her brother Billy's birthday, and everyone was helping to get ready for the party. Dad was blowing up balloons, Mom was decorating the cake, and her other brother, Mike, was painting a sign that said, "Happy Birthday Billy."

Jessica jumped into the kitchen. "How can I help, Mom?" she asked.

"I have a special job for you Jessica," Mom said. "I'm trying to decorate Billy's birthday cake with frosting, and he's trying to decorate it with his fingers. Would you take Billy in the other room? Maybe, he'd like to play with this new ball."

"Yeah," smiled Billy. "He does like his new ball, Mom," laughed Jessica. "I saw him trying to eat it this morning, but it was too big for his mouth."

"Do you remember our poem about eating things you find, Jessica?" Mom sighed.

"Oh sure, Mom," said Jessica. **"It may look pretty. It may smell good. But before I taste it, I'll ask if I should."**

"Great!" Mom said. "Big five-year-olds like you understand that the poem means you should never eat or drink anything without asking if it is safe, or if it is a poison. Billy does not understand that, so when you are with Billy, you must ask for him."

"Okay Mom," squealed Jessica as she chased Billy into the living room.

As they rounded the corner, they almost ran into their big brother, Mike, who was standing on a stool trying to hang Billy's birthday banner on the wall. "Hand me the tape please, this needs an extra piece."

"Sure, Mike," Jessica said. "You've done a great job! I like the dinosaurs you painted on the sign, don't you Billy?"

When Jessica looked down, Billy had picked up the can filled with what looked like water with paintbrushes in it. He was about to take a drink when Jessica yelled; “Wait Billy!” and she snatched the can away.

“Oh no!” Mike said as he jumped off the stool. “Did Billy drink that?”

“No,” Jessica said. “I know that **it may look pretty. It may smell good. But before I taste it, I’ll ask if I should!**”

“This is not safe to drink! It’s the stuff I got from the garage to clean my paintbrush. You saved Billy, Jessica. It would have made him very sick,” Mike explained as he took the can from Jessica. “Daddy told me I should be very careful because this is a poison.”

“Yuck,” Billy said.

“Yes, Yuck!” Mike said as he headed for the garage to put the paint cleaner away.

“I’m glad I stopped you, Billy,” Jessica said as she gave him a huge hug. “Who wants to be sick and in bed on their birthday!”

**Ding-Dong.** Grandma and Grandpa burst in. Grandma was carrying a giant bouquet of flowers from her garden and Grandpa was balancing a basket of apples and a pile of presents. “Happy Birthday, Billy!” Grandma said while reaching down to give Billy a big hug. Instead of giving his grandma a hug, he grabbed a handful of Grandma’s flowers and stuffed them in his mouth.

“Oh Billy,” Jessica moaned. “You didn’t ask first!” “Listen to your big sister,” Grandma said. “Not everything from my garden is safe to eat.” “That’s right,” Grandpa said, **“It may look pretty. It may smell good. But before I taste it, I’ll ask if I should.”**

“Why Grandpa,” Jessica said. “You know Mommy’s poem too.” “Yes,” Grandpa laughed. “I was around when she learned it.”

Jessica’s daddy popped his head out of the kitchen door. “It’s birthday party time!” he said. “It’s a good thing,” Jessica said. “Because I think Billy is hungry!”

Everyone went into the kitchen and sat around the big table Dad had decorated with balloons. Grandma put her flowers in a vase next to Mom’s beautiful cake. Billy laughed and clapped his hands as everyone sang “Happy Birthday.”

When Mom gave him the first piece of cake, Billy said, “Yum,” and grabbed it with fingers and stuffed it in his mouth.

Then Jessica’s mom cut the second piece of cake and said, “This one goes to Jessica, my big helper.” She added as she scooped up a spoonful of ice cream:

***“This does look pretty. This does smell good.  
It’s safe to eat because Mom said you could!”***

## **We Ask First**

To the tune of “Three Blind Mice”

**We Ask First, We Ask First  
What We May Taste  
What We May Taste  
When Something Looks Like It’s good to Chew  
And Might Even Smell Like It’s Yummy To You  
It Could Be A Poison So Here’s What We Do...  
We Ask First,  
We Ask First.**

- Student’s name can be substituted: “Amy Asks First, Amy Asks First...”
- The children might enjoy teaching the song to brothers and sisters at home.
- The teacher should explain again that children should ask first because some things that might look good to eat or drink may in reality be something that is not safe.
- The teacher may ask the students:
  - When should we ask what to eat?
  - Who should we ask what to eat?
  - Why should we ask what to eat?

## Lesson 3: Safe Use of Medicine and Vitamins

### *Is It Medicine or Candy?*

#### **Objectives:**

Children will:

- Understand when you can take medicine
- Explain who can give you medicine
- Explain ways medicine and vitamins can be poisonous
- Explain the appropriate number of vitamins to take

#### **Discussion:**

*Has anyone taken medicine before?* We take medicine when we are sick or hurt. It makes us feel better. There are different kinds of medicine for different kinds of illness or injuries.

*Who gives us medicine?* A trusted grown-up gives us medicine, like mom, dad, or the nurse or doctor. *If someone comes up to you on the playground and offers you some medicine, or a pretty colored pill or candy, what would you do?* Never take medicine or pills from your friends or a stranger. Always ask a trusted adult. We should also never take medicine by ourselves.

*Did you know medicine and vitamins can be poisonous?* Medicine and vitamins are good for us when we use them in the right way. Taking too much medicine or medicine that doesn't belong to us can be poisonous. Our bodies only need a certain amount of medicine and vitamins. Your doctor, pharmacist, or your parents know how much we need.

If you take vitamins, only take what a trusted adult says you can. Some medicine may look like candy or fruit juice, so always ask before you eat or drink anything. Sometimes medicine may even taste good—this does not mean you can drink a whole bottle or eat a bunch of pills that taste good. We should only take medicine when we are sick, and only when a grown-up we know and trusts gives it to us.

#### **Activity Description:**

Children will try to pick which pill is medicine or candy.

#### **Materials:**

Prepare an “Is It Medicine or Candy?” display. A medicine and candy display is an effective way to show adults how hard it is to tell the difference between candy and medicine, especially for children.

If you go down the medication aisle and candy aisle at your local grocery store you will be able to find many similarities. Here are some examples:

Red Sudafed\* pill

Red Hot\* candy

White Tylenol\* pill

Good n' Plenty\* candy

Flavored Tums\* tablet

Same flavor Sweet Tarts\* candy

[\*Indicates Trademark. These items were chosen for illustrative purposes only. The Washington Poison Center does not imply that these items are dangerous if used as directed on the label.]

Place the pills in a glass container with a lid. Be sure to keep the poisons in a container children cannot break open. Hold up the containers and have the children try to determine which is medicine and which is candy.

Another option is to buy a clear shadow box (available at craft stores) and hot glue the pills down on a piece of paper labeled "Is it Medicine or Candy?" Place the paper in the shadow box and ask the children to try to determine which is medicine or which is candy.

Note: The Yuk Box, as described on Page 7, includes a Medicine Cabinet displaying different medicines and candies.

# Lesson Plans & Activity Ideas for Mid- to Late-Elementary

## **Lesson 4: Poison Investigator** *Home Checklist*

Similar to Lesson Plan 1 – but for older children – adult supervision is extremely important for this activity. There is concern that children instructed to look for poisons at home, may actually find a dangerous poison.

### **Objectives:**

Children will:

- Review what poisons are and how poisons can hurt people
- Discuss correct emergency actions including location of poison center phone number and 911.
- Discuss prevention tips
- Discuss proper storage

### **Discussion:**

Students will each receive a Poison Investigator badge (see badge in Lesson 1), discuss “Home Checklist” and poison prevention tips.

Ask students if poisons have affected them, or anyone they know. *What happened?* Go over how poisons can affect the body and what poisons are. If someone has a poison emergency, talk about whom to ask for help (teacher, parent, older sibling, poison center: 1-800-222-1222, or 911).

Discuss with the children what investigators (detectives) do. Introduce the concept of students becoming a “Poison Investigator.” Read over the “Home Checklist” letter.

*Make a list of rooms on a whiteboard or other writing pad. Ask the children to name one poison that might be found in the rooms listed.*

Tell the children that they can become a “Poison Investigator” with the help of their parents or caretakers. Instruct them to go home, and with a grown-up, hunt for poisons that need to be locked up out of reach and sight of small children.

Send home the “Home Checklist” and the “Dear Parent Letter.” If phone and Mr. Yuk stickers have not been sent home already, send them home and instruct them to place the stickers on their emergency contact list and on poisonous products.

To protect young children, we must keep poisons away from them. *What can we do to protect them? Where do we store poisons?* Poisons like medicine, vitamins, and cleaning products should be stored out of reach and sight of small children (younger brothers and sisters). Young children can open unlocked doors, cabinets, and drawers. They can climb to reach poisons way up high. This is why we should try to store products in locked cabinets. There are many different ways to keep cabinets, drawers, and closet doors locked. Some stores even sell special locks called “safety locks” to use.

Poisons should never be left out and within reach while in use. Never leave poisons on tables, floors, or in unlocked cabinets. *For example, if your mom or dad is cleaning the glass using some kind of glass cleaner and the doorbell or phone rings, what should your parent do?* Take the poison with them or take the child with them – never leave poisons within reach of small children.

Most medicines have “child resistant caps” on them. These caps make it harder for children under the age of 3 to open the container. These caps are not 100% child proof. Children can still get in them (usually in a matter of a few minutes).

### **Materials:**

Poison Investigator Badge  
Home Checklist Parent Letter  
Home Checklist  
Washington Poison Center stickers  
Whiteboard or Flip chart with markers

### **Preparation:**

Make enough copies of the Poison Investigator Badge for each student  
Tape or pins to attach badges onto each child  
Copies of the Dear Parent Letter and Home Checklist

### **Instruction:**

Instruct each child to go home, and with parent supervision, look for poisons in their home like a “Poison Investigator” using the “Home Checklist” letter to be returned to the teacher.

## Lesson 5: Product Directions

### Objectives:

Demonstrate the importance of reading and following directions on products.

### Discussion:

*How many of you help clean the house or work outside in the yard?* You probably see and use poisons everyday. The cleaner you use to clean the bathroom and the gasoline you use to run your lawn mower can be poisonous. These products are safe as long as they are used in the right way and do not get into your body.

Many people do not take the time to read labels. They do not realize the product is dangerous and do not know how to use the product.

Most products in the market today come in containers with labels on them. These labels give us important information about how to use the product, and provide safety information. Directions and safety information may start with words like (write these words on a whiteboard):

Caution	Fatal	Danger
Warning	Flammable	Caustic
Beware	Toxic Harmful	Poison
Hazardous		

We call these “caution” words. These words are used to tell us something is dangerous and should be used very carefully. Before touching or tasting anything, you should ask a grown-up.

**Activity Description:** Children identify “caution” words on household product labels

**Materials:** Clean, EMPTY ‘poison containers,’ one for each child, examples:

Medicine	Nail Polish Remover	Vitamins
Bleach	Dishwashing Detergent	Floor Cleaner
Mouthwash	Perfume/Cologne	Furniture Polish

**Preparation:** Divide children into pairs. Give each pair two empty containers.

### Instruction:

Write the list of “caution” words on the whiteboard. Instruct each group to look for “caution” words on each of the containers. After the groups have finished identifying their “caution” words, ask one from each group to come up and put a check on the board next to the word they found. After all the groups have checked off the words they found, discuss the meaning of each word.

# Take Home Letters

## Letter from the Washington Poison Center

Dear Parent,

Over two million children and adults will be poisoned this year in the United States. Poisonings are preventable—especially among children. Your child has participated in a poison prevention program. We hope that your child has learned to protect themselves and others from the harm of poisons. This can only happen if you, as a parent, also take time to learn about poisons and poison safety. ***Children act fast, so do poisons!***

Your child has brought home some poison safety information. Please read over this important information with your child. Make sure you place the Washington Poison Center's emergency number on or near your telephone(s) – 1-800-222-1222. The Poison Center operates the 24-hour emergency telephone service providing poison treatment and prevention information to residents of Washington State. Call the Poison Center in a poison emergency or if you have a question about the safety of any product, medicine, or plant. All calls to the Poison Center are free and confidential (there is a \$30 credit card charge for calls about pets/animals).

To prevent poisonings from occurring in your home, make sure your home, and any home your child visits, is “*poison proof*.” Your child has brought home a “Home Checklist” which will help you to poison proof your home. Some of the prevention tips listed includes:

- Keep all poisons, including medicine, household products, and plants, out of the sight and reach of children.
- Store these products in child-resistant containers and in locked cabinets.

For more information on protecting your family from poisons, call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 to request information.

Sincerely,

**Kerri Booth**

Kerri Booth, MS, CHES  
Communications Director  
Washington Poison Center  
[www.wapc.org](http://www.wapc.org)  
find us on Facebook



## Checklist Back to Teacher

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,  
(name of teacher)

I took this checklist home to my family and together we went throughout the house and checked all the places where potential poisons might be found. We talked about placing poisonous products in high places, locking them up, and placing Mr. Yuk stickers on containers. I'm going to try to protect my family and children who come visit us so that they will be safe from poisoning.

Here are the places my family and I looked to see if potentially poisonous products were stored safely.

<input type="checkbox"/> kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/> bathrooms	<input type="checkbox"/> bedrooms
<input type="checkbox"/> garage	<input type="checkbox"/> closets	<input type="checkbox"/> laundry room
<input type="checkbox"/> dining room	<input type="checkbox"/> workshop	<input type="checkbox"/> storage places
<input type="checkbox"/> basement	<input type="checkbox"/> attic	<input type="checkbox"/> yard

My family and I looked especially for these things:

<input type="checkbox"/> all medicines and vitamins	<input type="checkbox"/> paint remover, turpentine
<input type="checkbox"/> house plants	<input type="checkbox"/> cosmetics
<input type="checkbox"/> disinfectants, deodorants, air fresheners	<input type="checkbox"/> soaps, detergents, shampoo
<input type="checkbox"/> all kinds of sprays	<input type="checkbox"/> toilet bowl and drain cleaners
<input type="checkbox"/> polishes, cleaning powders	<input type="checkbox"/> lye, bleaches
<input type="checkbox"/> moth balls, pesticides	<input type="checkbox"/> kerosene, lighter fluids
<input type="checkbox"/> ant and rat poison, slug bait	<input type="checkbox"/> insect repellent

Here is a list of poisonous products we found which were not listed:

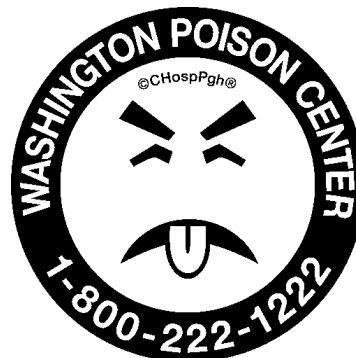
I made sure the Washington Poison Center phone number is beside our telephone:

*We hope our home is now poison proof!*

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of child)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name of parent)



## What do I look for?

Look for these potentially poisonous items that need to be used and stored safely, preferably in child-resistant containers:

### Kitchen

- medications
- drain cleaner-lye & bleaches
- furniture polish
- powdered & liquid detergents
- cleanser & scouring powders
- metal cleaners
- ammonia
- oven cleaner
- rust remover
- pills
- carpet & upholstery cleaners
- dishwasher detergents
- alcoholic beverages
- moldy or rotten food

### Laundry

- bleaches
- soaps & detergents
- disinfectant
- bluing, dyes
- spot removers or drycleaners

### Bathroom

- medications
- drain cleaners-lye
- iron pills
- shampoo, lotions & sprays
- creams
- nail polish & remover
- suntan products
- deodorants
- shaving lotions
- toilet bowl cleaners
- diaper pail deodorizers
- hair remover
- pine oil & bath oil
- rubbing alcohol
- boric acid
- room deodorizer
- camphor-containing products
- denture tablets

### Bedroom

- medications
- jewelry cleaner
- cosmetics
- perfume

### Garage, Basement, Workshop

- lye
- kerosene
- lime
- bug killers
- gasoline
- lighter fluids
- turpentine
- paint remover & thinner
- pesticides
- weed killers
- fertilizers
- anti-freeze
- lamp oil

### Closets, Attic, & Storage Places

- rat & ant poisons
- moth balls
- sprays

### General

- flaking paint
- repainted toys
- broken plaster
- pet medications & products

### Purse

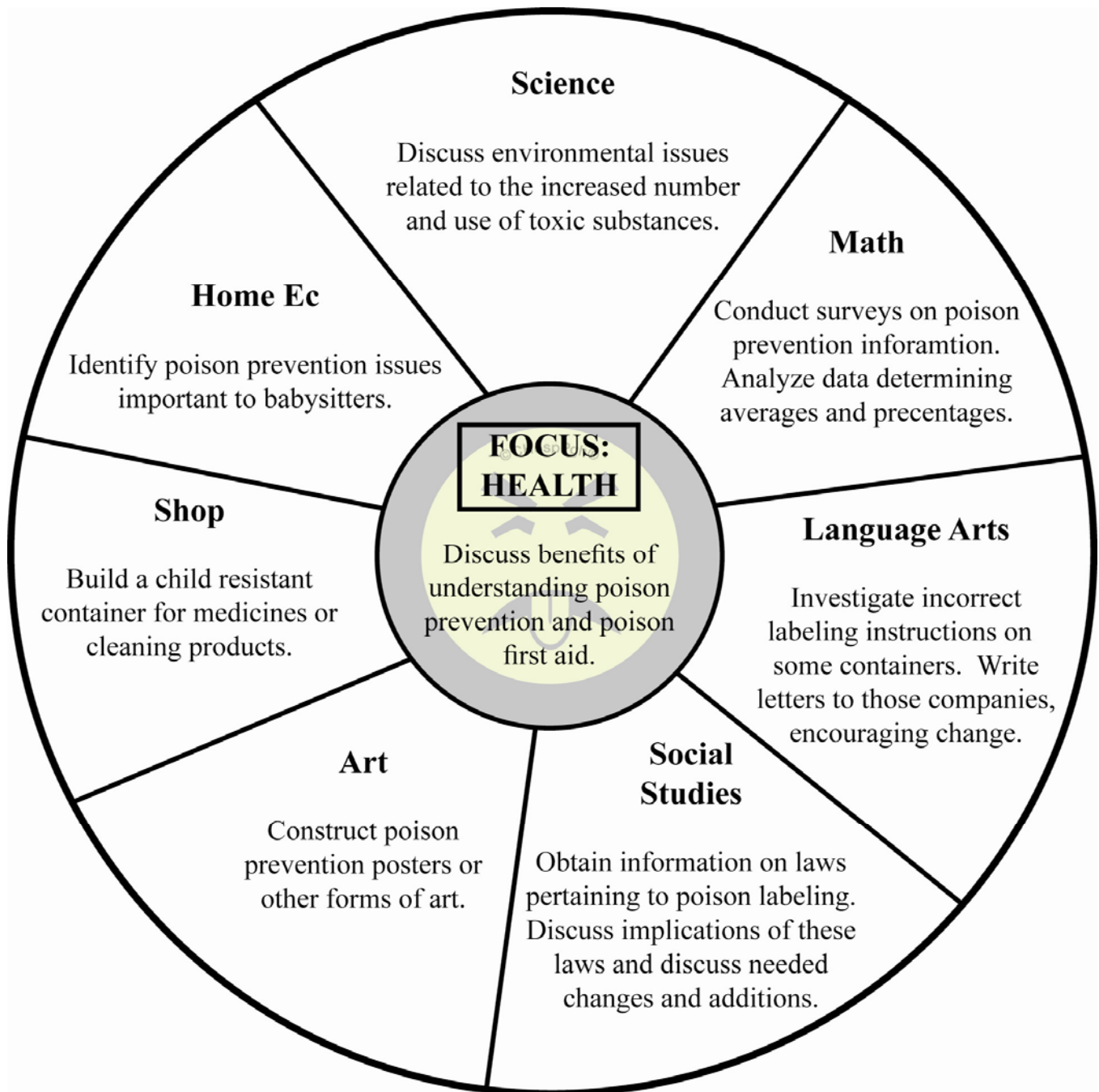
- medications
- cigarettes



## What else can I do to make my home safer from poison?

- Put a Mr. Yuk sticker on many of the items listed above
- Install and test carbon monoxide (CO) alarms
- Post the Poison Center phone number by your phone (call 1-800-222-1222 and ask for a phone sticker)

# Wheel of Ideas for Teenage Students



# Evaluation

At the Washington Poison Center, it is important for us to know how our materials are being used and dispersed throughout the state. Following the use of this teacher resource guide, we'd like to know how you used our materials and what you think of the information and lessons. Please take a moment to complete the evaluation sheet enclosed with your materials and return it to us at the address listed at the bottom.

We appreciate your comments as we are always looking to improve our materials and provide appropriate information for each individual request. Your participation in this evaluation processes will also help us to continue the service of providing this information to the public throughout the state.

Group or school using this Teacher's Guide \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Age of audience \_\_\_\_\_ Number attended \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) program was given \_\_\_\_\_

Lessons Used (check all that apply):

- Lesson 1: What are Poisons?
- Lesson 2: What do Poisons Look and Smell Like?
- Lesson 3: Safe Use of Medications and Vitamins
- Lesson 4: Advanced Poison Investigator
- Lesson 5: Product Directions
- Parent Take-Home Letters

## Evaluation of Program

1. Time spent on program preparation, administration, and follow-up:  
\_\_\_\_\_ hours/minutes

2. What is your overall evaluation of the program?  
(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Excellent)

3. Did the program and handouts meet your needs?  
(Not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Completely)

4. Did the program keep the student's attention? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

5. I would recommend the program to my colleagues? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

6. The materials arrived in a timely manner.

(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Excellent)

7. The materials were easy to read and appropriate for my students.

(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 (Excellent)

8. What could be done to improve the Teacher's Guide and Lesson Plans?

Please complete this form and return to:

Washington Poison Center  
Attn: Education Department  
155 NE 100<sup>th</sup> St, Suite 100  
Seattle, WA 98125-8007

Or by fax: (206) 526-8490

# Acknowledgements

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Central New York Poison Center

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Oregon Poison Center

Philadelphia Poison Control Center