Accidental poisoning can happen in any home. The natural impulse is to act at once, but the wrong treatment may be more harmful than none.

- Know the National Poison Control emergency number:
  - Keep Activated Charcoal in your first aid kit.**
  **This should not be used except on the advice of the Poison Center or your doctor or health care provider.
- If the person has collapsed or stopped breathing, call 911 or your local emergency number right away.
- **Poison in the eyes?**
  - Rinse eyes with running water for 15 to 20 minutes.
  - Call 1-800-222-1222.
- **Poison on the skin?**
  - Take off any clothing that the poison touched and rinse skin with running water for 15 to 20 minutes.
  - Call 1-800-222-1222.
- **Inhaled poison?**
  - Get to fresh air right away.
  - Call 1-800-222-1222.
- **Swallowed the wrong medicine or too much medicine?**
  - Call 1-800-222-1222.
- **Swallowed something that’s not food or drink?**
  - Drink a small amount of milk or water.
  - Call 1-800-222-1222.

When You Call for Help
Tell the Poison Expert:

- The victim’s age and weight;
- Existing health conditions or problems;
- The substance involved and how it contacted the victim (was it swallowed, inhaled, absorbed through skin contact, or splashed into the eyes?);
- Any first which may have been given;
- If the victim has vomited;
- Your location and how long it will take you to get to medical help (or how long medical help will take to get to you);
- If you’ve called 911.
Substances Most Common in Alaska’s Poison Exposures

- Medications/Vitamins
- Lamp Oil
- Petroleum Products
- Cosmetics/ Perfume
- Household Products
- Carbon Monoxide
- Foods/Plants

Medication Poisoning

Over 63% of poisoning hospitalization incidents for Alaska children age 0-4 from 1994-1998 involved the child getting into medications; usually belonging to a family member. Vitamins, especially those containing iron, can be deadly to children, even in small doses. Prevent medication poisonings:
- store medications locked out of sight and out of reach of children;
- don’t call medicine candy;
- take medications where children can’t watch;
- read labels and follow directions carefully;
- use the dispenser that comes packaged with children’s medications;
- ask for child-resistant packaging.

Food/Plants Poisoning

There were 6-21 cases of food-related botulism per year in Alaska between 1991-1996.
- Most botulism cases are due to fermented traditional Alaska native foods and seal oil. Non-traditional methods of fermenting food (using plastic) increases the risk of botulism by increasing the risk of conditions ideal for growing bacteria.
- Paralytic Shellfish poisonings are seen throughout Alaska’s coastline villages and towns. Shellfish collected from uncertified beaches should not be eaten.
- It is hard to determine which mushrooms are poisonous. Pick and dispose of all mushrooms and toadstools that grow in your yard - they are all considered poisonous. Best bet is: don’t eat wild mushrooms.

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Alaskans are at high risk of carbon monoxide poisoning due to space heaters in cabins, tents, boats, and other poorly-ventilated areas. Carbon monoxide poisoning was responsible for 8% of all child & adolescent poisonings in Alaska from 1994-1998.
- Know the symptoms: severe headaches, dizziness, confusion, nausea, faintness, and shortness of breath. These symptoms are similar to those of many other illnesses.
- Play it safe: get fresh air immediately; open doors and windows, turn off appliances, and leave the house. Go to the emergency room or health clinic and tell the staff that you suspect CO poisoning.
- Prevention: have fuel-burning appliances inspected every year, vent fuel-burning appliances outside whenever possible, don’t idle the car in the garage, don’t use a gas oven to heat your home.
- Don’t ignore symptoms - get help at once.

Alaska Deaths from Poison—1990-1998

There were 392 deaths from poisoning from 1990-1998. Most of those deaths were to people in the 31-50 age range.*

From 1994-1998, there were eight deaths and 206 non-fatal injury hospitalizations to Alaskan children age 0-19.**