Stop Children from swallowing Hazardous Chemicals

KEEP THEM SAFE
OUT OF REACH • OUT OF SIGHT

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Department of Trade and Industry
Every year almost 10,000 young children are rushed to hospital because they have swallowed household chemicals. The vast majority of these cases are children under the age of 3 years old. White spirit, paint stripper, brush cleaner, disinfectant, bleach and lavatory cleaner are the most common causes of concern.

Most of these accidents occur in the home; most of the chemicals have been left within easy reach; and over half happened when the children were left alone for five minutes. Inquisitive toddlers love to explore brightly labelled and interesting bottles and containers.

Hazardous chemicals have warning labels:

- **Harmful/Irritant**
  A substance which is not a serious health risk but may cause some ill health if it is inhaled or consumed or penetrates the skin. Some substances will irritate the skin and eyes.

- **Toxic/Very Toxic**
  A substance which causes a serious risk to health if swallowed, and in some cases if inhaled or spilt on the skin.

- **Corrosive**
  A substance which may cause painful burns and destroys living tissue.

**Parents**

- **DO** always keep household chemicals out of sight and reach of children, preferably lock them away.
- **DON’T** leave household chemicals by the toilet or on a low shelf in the kitchen or garage.
- **CHILD RESTISTANT CLOSURES** are used to protect your children from the more hazardous chemicals.
- **DO** always replace the lid on such containers after use.
- **DON’T EVER** transfer the chemicals from such containers to other types of bottles - if you do you could be putting your child at risk.

**Remember!**

If a child is suspected of swallowing any household chemical, you should:

- Try to act calmly and avoid upsetting the child.
- Gently give a drink of water. This dilutes the poison.
- **DON’T** make the child sick.
- Telephone either your GP or the nearest A&E department to find out whether the child needs to go to hospital.
- If you cannot contact your doctor, take the child quickly to hospital. If necessary, call an ambulance.
- Take the container and product you think has been swallowed. Do not rely on memory.