



COVID-19: Poison Prevention and Medicine Safety — Staying Safe While Staying Home

While we are spending time at home with more people, more cleaning products and more medicine, it's important to know how to keep your family safe. The following tips can help.

How can I store and use household products safely?

- **Store cleaning products safely:** Store food and non-food products separately in your home. Keep the original label on the container intact. Use child-resistant containers whenever possible and be sure they are closed properly. Learn more tips by visiting nyc.gov/health and searching for **poison proof your home**.
- **Use cleaning products safely:** When used correctly, bleach and other cleaning products are helpful to prevent the spread of germs. Only use one cleaning product at a time. Mixing cleaning products, such as ammonia and bleach, creates a poisonous gas. Open a window whenever possible to make sure there is air flow.
- **Be careful with hand sanitizer:** Hand sanitizer may be difficult to find in the store right now. Making home hand sanitizer is not recommended because, if not made properly, it may not be effective in infection control and prevention. In addition, improperly-made hand sanitizer can cause damage to your skin. Ingestion of any alcohol-based hand sanitizer and excessive topical use of hand sanitizer, especially for children, can also be dangerous. Typical use of topical hand sanitizer on hands alone should be fine.

How can I store, use, manage and dispose of medicines safely?

- **Store medicines safely:** Keep medicines in a locked cabinet or locked medicine box. Never keep vitamins and medicines on the kitchen table or another easy to reach surface. Use child-resistant containers. Be sure the bottle is closed properly.
- **Dose medicines safely:** Always use the dosing instrument (for example, a dropper, syringe or cup) that comes with the medicine. Never use a kitchen spoon to dose medicine to children. When multiple medicines are being used to treat symptoms, it's important to keep track of when and how much is given. A medicine communication log or keeping a list can help prevent double dosing of medicines. Post this in a place where all caregivers can easily see it and show when medicine is given throughout the day.
- **Take medicines safely:** If you're taking or giving medicine, remember that many products to treat a fever and flu symptoms contain the same active ingredient. Follow the recommended dose on the medicine label. Check with the New York City (NYC) Poison Control Center to make sure you are not taking too much of one product or products with the same active ingredient.
- **Manage your medicines safely:** Use a medicine list to keep track of your prescription and nonprescription medicines, including herbal products, vitamins and supplements.

- **Ask questions about medicines:** Check with the NYC Poison Control Center to ask questions about drug interactions, side effects, and dosing correctly. Learn more and download the medicine list and log by visiting nyc.gov/health and searching for **medicine safety**. Resources are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole and Korean.
- **Dispose of your medicines safely:** To dispose of medications, mix them with water and then add cat litter, coffee grounds or another undesirable substance to avoid unintentional or intentional misuse of drugs. Place all medicines in a sealable container and seal with strong tape. Get rid of medicines as close to your trash collection day as possible to avoid misuse or misdirection.

Beware of false and unsafe “anti-COVID-19” information

- Misinformation and misunderstanding have led to the unsafe use of products and medicines mistakenly thought to prevent COVID-19 and instead resulting in serious illness and even death.
- Only follow directions from your health care provider on how to treat any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Social (physical) distancing and frequent hand washing are currently the only approved preventive measures for COVID-19.
- Do not drink diluted bleach. This can cause injury to your mouth, throat and stomach and will not treat or prevent COVID-19.

Call the NYC Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS (212-764-7667). Registered pharmacists and nurses are available 24/7 to answer questions about the safe use of products, medicines and any other potential poisons. All calls are confidential and free of charge. Interpretation services are available.

To learn more, visit nyc.gov/health and search for **Poison Control**.

For general information on COVID-19, including how to guard against stigma, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.