

- **How Poisoning Occurs**

Poisoning results from exposure to a chemical substance. The exposure may be brief, e.g., a bee sting, or long-term, e.g., exposure to lead paint.

Bites and Stings

The toxic substance emitted in insect stings can cause an allergic reaction in many children which may lead to death. Animal bites (dogs, snakes, etc.) puncture the skin and may inject toxic substances directly into the blood stream. Some children are also allergic to saliva and hair from animals.

Ingestion

Toxic substances that are swallowed are absorbed into the blood stream through the gastrointestinal tract in the same way that food is absorbed. Poison Control Centers may recommend syrup of ipecac to induce vomiting in cases of ingested poisons.

Inhalation

Breathing poisonous fumes into the lungs brings them into direct contact with the blood stream. Common poisonous fumes include carbon monoxide, chlorine and other gases, ammonia, and aerosol can fumes.

Skin Contact

Poisons can be absorbed through contact with the skin. For example, undiluted bleach can chemically destroy the skin tissue.

Puncture/Injection

A puncture of the skin can bring a toxic substance into direct contact with the blood stream. Punctures also raise the possibility of tetanus.

- **Recognizing the Signs of Poisoning**

The following conditions suggest the possibility of poisoning:

- Nausea, vomiting or sudden cramps
 - Coughing or shortness of breath
 - Cold, clammy skin
 - Burns around the mouth
 - Disoriented, slurred speech
 - Dizziness, drowsiness, or unconsciousness
 - Unexplained convulsions
- (California Child Care Health Project, 1991)