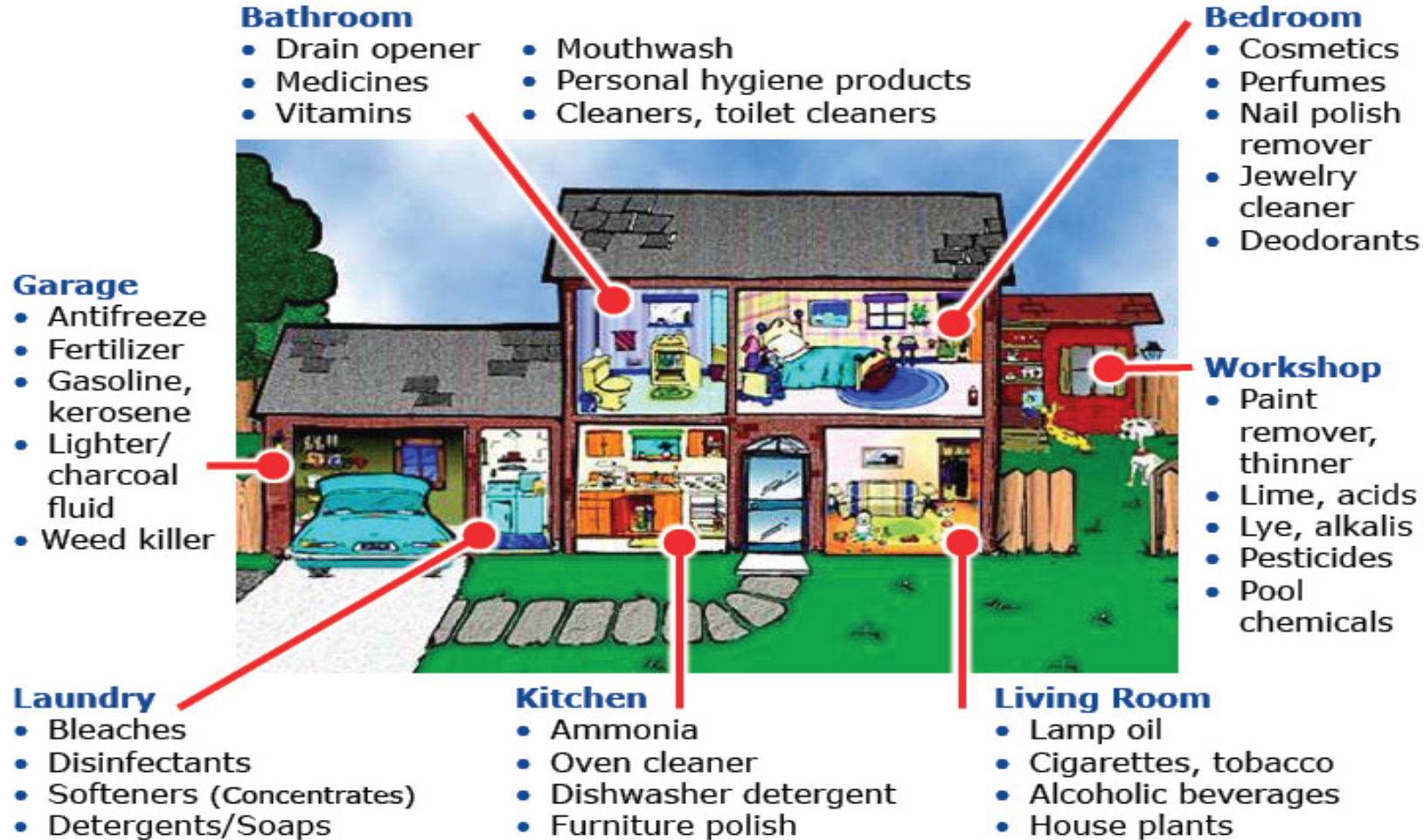


# Chemicals (and Other Poisons) in the Home Care Environment



# Poisons throughout the Home



# Chemical Safety in the Home

- ▶ Most people use chemicals at home every day. Cleaning products such as bleach, oven sprays, and toilet cleaners are chemicals. So are paints, glues, oils, pesticides, and medicines.
- ▶ Most of the chemicals you use at home aren't dangerous - if you use them properly. However, some chemicals require more careful handling than others.
- ▶ Labels can help you identify the more hazardous chemicals, tell you what the dangers are, and advise how to use chemicals safely.

# Recognizing Harmful Chemicals

- ▶ Hazard pictograms form part of the international Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS).
- ▶ Most chemical products carry these hazard symbols telling you whether a substance is harmful and in what way. You might even see more than one symbol on a single product.
- ▶ The GHS hazard symbols were updated several years ago, so you might encounter some that are unfamiliar or at least are different from the ones you grew up with.
- ▶ Some common hazard symbols are:

Old hazard symbol



New hazard symbol



Irritant/harmful: causes irritation or harm if swallowed, inhaled, and/or in contact with skin.



Toxic: poisonous if swallowed, inhaled, and/or in contact with skin.



Flammable: easily catches fire.

# Using Chemical Products Safely

- ▶ To stay safe when using potentially harmful products in the home, always read the warning label and follow the instructions.
- ▶ Follow these additional guidelines, as well:
  - ▶ Use all chemicals sparingly. More is not better, just more dangerous.
  - ▶ If a substance is hazardous, remove clients, children, and pets from the area for as long as recommended on the label.
  - ▶ Properly ventilate the area by opening the windows.
  - ▶ Wear protective clothing and/or equipment. For example, wear gloves, long sleeves, and a mask.
  - ▶ Never leave chemical products unattended. If you need to step away, ensure another adult is present to steer away curious children or pets that may encounter the opened products.
  - ▶ Never combine chlorine bleach and ammonia! When combined, these two common household cleaners form a highly toxic gas. In other words, you could die from doing this.
  - ▶ After using chemicals, wash with warm soapy water any part of yourself that came in direct contact with the substances.



# Storing/Disposing of Chemical Products

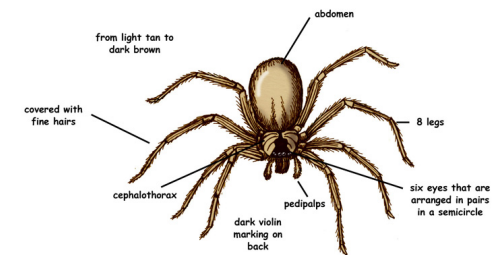
- ▶ Safely store chemicals by following the storage instructions on the label.
- ▶ In addition, in most cases you should:
  - ▶ Keep products in their original containers. Never transfer products into other containers, because:
    - ▶ The other containers might not be capable of safely storing the substances.
    - ▶ You might not remember what is in the alternate container.
    - ▶ Children and/or clients might mistakenly think the substance is safe.
  - ▶ Keep all hazardous chemicals locked up or otherwise out of the reach of young children, or even the client (when appropriate).
  - ▶ Never store hazardous chemicals near food or food products.
  - ▶ Keep hazardous chemicals away from items used to prepare and cook foods, such as pots, pans, and cooking utensils.

# Poison Prevention - What is Poison?

- ▶ A poison is any product or substance that can harm someone if it is used in the wrong way, by the wrong person, or in the wrong amount.
- ▶ Potentially poisonous items could include:
  - ▶ Some household products
  - ▶ Chemicals at work or in the environment
  - ▶ Drugs (prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, illegal, or animal medicines)
  - ▶ Snake bites
  - ▶ Spider bites
  - ▶ Scorpion stings
- ▶ Poisons can enter the body through the eyes or ears, on or through the skin, by breathing them, or by swallowing something you shouldn't.



**Brown Recluse Spider**  
*Loxosceles reclusa*



©Sheri Amsel

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



# Poisons Commonly Impacting Children

- ▶ Cosmetics such as perfume or nail polish
- ▶ Personal care products such as mouthwash, deodorant, and soap
- ▶ Alcohol and tobacco products
- ▶ Cleaning products, mothballs, and rodent, and insect poisons
- ▶ Pain medicines (analgesics) such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- ▶ Foreign bodies and toys with silica gel packages to remove moisture in packaging and glow products
- ▶ Topical preparations such as diaper rash cream, hydrogen peroxide, acne preparations, or calamine lotion
- ▶ Liquid paint, dried/flaking paint, paint thinner, gasoline, kerosene, and lamp oil
- ▶ Batteries, antifreeze, and windshield washer solution



# Poisons Commonly Impacting Adults

- ▶ Pain medicines (analgesics), which could be over-the-counter, prescribed, or illegal. Examples include aspirin, oxycodone, acetaminophen, methadone, and ibuprofen.
- ▶ Sedatives (drugs to reduce anxiety), hypnotics (sleeping pills), and antipsychotics (drugs used to treat mental illness).
- ▶ Household cleaning products
- ▶ Antidepressants
- ▶ Cardiovascular drugs (drugs to treat heart disease)
- ▶ Alcohol
- ▶ Topical anesthetics (for example, products for sunburn pain)

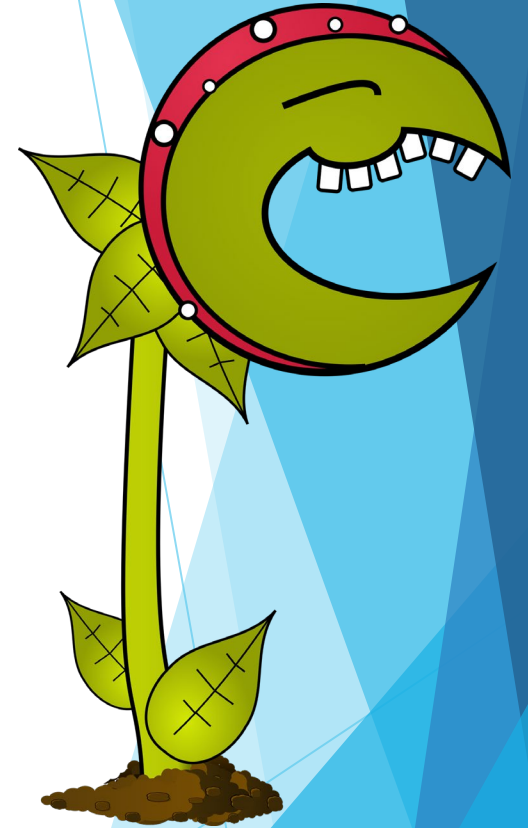
# Poison Prevention - Medicines

- ▶ **Medicine storage:**
  - ▶ Store medicines and products in their original containers.
  - ▶ Lock or store medicines out of reach of young children.
  - ▶ Use child-resistant packaging. Replace the caps tightly.
- ▶ **Medicine usage:**
  - ▶ Read the label **before** taking or giving medicine.
  - ▶ Use medicine only as directed by your doctor or the label.
  - ▶ Call medicine by its proper name, not “candy.”



# Poison Prevention - House Plants

- ▶ House Plants
  - ▶ Keep house plants out of reach of children and pets.
  - ▶ Even if the plants are not poisonous, they could cause choking.



# Poison Prevention - Household Equipment

- ▶ Keep appliances, furnaces, fireplaces, and wood-burning stoves in good repair.
- ▶ Install a carbon monoxide alarm.
- ▶ Replace the alarm batteries regularly. For example, when you reset your clocks every six months for “spring forward” or “fall back,” remember to also change the alarm batteries.

# What to Do - Chemical Splashes

- ▶ Here are recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in case of splashing chemicals in the eyes or on the skin:
  - ▶ **In the USA, the poison control number is 1-800-222-1222.** Program this number into every cell phone and post it near every landline phone.
  - ▶ If someone splashes chemicals in their eyes:
    - ▶ Rinse the eyes with cool water for 15 minutes in the shower or under the faucet.
    - ▶ Also call your poison control number or dial 911.
    - ▶ Remove contact lenses. Do not rub the eyes, and do not add any substance other than cool water to the eyes.
    - ▶ If possible, wear sunglasses while being transported to the ER.
  - ▶ If someone splashes chemicals on the skin:
    - ▶ Remove the contaminated clothing, shoes, and jewelry, taking care to avoid getting the chemicals in the eyes.
    - ▶ Rinse the skin for at least 15 minutes in the shower or under a faucet.
    - ▶ Also call your poison control center or dial 911.



# What to Do - Ingesting/Inhaling

- ▶ Here are recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in case of drinking or inhaling a poisonous substance:
  - ▶ **In the USA, the poison control number is 1-800-222-1222.** Program this number into every cell phone and post it near every landline phone.
  - ▶ If someone drinks a household chemical
    - ▶ Give them half a glass of water to drink.
    - ▶ Also call your poison control number or dial 911.
  - ▶ If someone inhales a poisonous gas:
    - ▶ Quickly get the person to fresh air.
    - ▶ Do not breathe the fumes yourself.
    - ▶ If you can do so safely, open all doors and windows wide.
    - ▶ Also call your poison control number or dial 911.
  - ▶ If someone is not breathing or won't wake up, dial 911 or your call local paramedics.



# Suspected Poisoning - the Short Story

- ▶ If you suspect someone has been exposed to a hazardous substance, you must seek medical attention right away:
  - ▶ Call the poison control center immediately at **1-800-222-1222**.
  - ▶ **DO NOT WAIT** to call! Do not wait for symptoms!
  - ▶ The poison control experts will tell you exactly what to do. They will frequently follow up with you by phone to ensure that everything is all right.

# In Conclusion

- ▶ Household chemicals are part of our daily lives. They can be used safely, or they can be deadly.
- ▶ Following the appropriate precautions for usage and storage of hazardous chemicals helps keep ourselves, loved ones, and home care clients safe.
- ▶ Become aware of the hazards of commonly used products that are literally in every room of our homes.
- ▶ Be proactive about storing (and using) chemicals away from children and pets.
- ▶ Be sure to read labels and follow instructions when using chemicals.
- ▶ Familiarize yourself with emergency procedures for chemical exposures so you'll be prepared in case of accidents.
- ▶ Remember to program the USA poison control number into your cell phone and post it near every landline phone. **1-800-222-1222**