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

Bathroom
- Drain opener
- Medicines
- Vitamins
- Mouthwash
- Personal hygiene products
- Cleaners, toilet cleaners

Garage
- Antifreeze
- Fertilizer
- Gasoline, kerosene
- Lighter/charcoal fluid
- Weed killer

Laundry
- Bleaches
- Disinfectants
- Softeners (Concentrates)
- Detergents/Soaps

Kitchen
- Ammonia
- Oven cleaner
- Dishwasher detergent
- Furniture polish

Living Room
- Lamp oil
- Cigarettes, tobacco
- Alcoholic beverages
- House plants

Bedroom
- Cosmetics
- Perfumes
- Nail polish remover
- Jewelry cleaner
- Deodorants

Workshop
- Paint remover, thinner
- Lime, acids
- Lye, alkalis
- Pesticides
- Pool chemicals
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old hazard symbol</th>
<th>New hazard symbol</th>
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<tr>
<td>Irritant/harmful: causes irritation or harm if swallowed, inhaled, and/or in contact with skin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toxic: poisonous if swallowed, inhaled, and/or in contact with skin.</td>
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<td>Flammable: easily catches fire.</td>
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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.
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**