

# Poisonous and dangerous plants

Information for parents and caregivers



Kidsafe SA Inc. • September 2010

## Symptoms of poisoning from plants

Symptoms can include:

- Vomiting
- Stomach cramps
- Irregular heart beat
- Burning to the mouth
- Convulsions (fits).

The type and severity of symptoms will vary according to the type of plant eaten, the amount swallowed and the size of the child.

Skin rashes and asthma are the most common allergic reactions.

The most common problems are stinging around the mouth and skin allergies.

## First aid

- For skin contact – gently wash the skin with clear running water until you are sure the substance is removed. Do not rub the skin.
- For eye contact – irrigate (wash out) the eye(s) with clear running water for approximately 20 minutes.
- For swallowed plants – remove any bits of plant in the mouth, and wash out your child's mouth with water.
- Phone the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26.
- If you need to go to hospital, take a bit of the plant with you if you can.

If your child is having problems breathing, is fitting, or unconscious, immediately call for an ambulance on 000.

There are many 'common' plants that are poisonous, can cause an allergic reaction, or are dangerous because of their sharp spines or prickles.

Young children are particularly at risk, especially those who are beginning to crawl and walk. This is because as they become more mobile, they are keen to explore new things by touching and tasting. Young children under about 18 months tend to be at most risk of eating bits of plants, or touching strange looking plants.

To reduce the likelihood of young children eating or handling poisonous or dangerous plants, take the following precautions:

- Remove known poisonous or dangerous plants, or fence them off.
- Teach children from a young age not to eat anything from plants in the garden. However, young children until the age of three cannot be relied upon to do as they are told on a consistent basis.
- Keep the Poisons Information Centre phone number 13 11 26 near your phone, or program it into the phone for speed dialling.

## Plants to watch out for

There are some plants in the list over the page, which you need to be aware of and avoid having in your garden. It is important that you identify all plants in your garden, and in the gardens where your young child plays.

If you need help identifying a plant in your garden, you can check with your local nursery, or look at the website for the Australian National Botanic Gardens for information about poisonous plants [www.anbg.gov.au/poison-plants/index.html](http://www.anbg.gov.au/poison-plants/index.html)



[www.kidsafesa.com.au](http://www.kidsafesa.com.au)

## Poisonous plants

These plants are considered harmful to children and should be AVOIDED if you have young children

Plant	Toxic part	Symptoms
African Milk Bush <i>Synadenium Grantii</i>	All parts	Irritation of the lining of the mouth (mucous surfaces), diarrhoea, vomiting.
Agapanthus <i>Agapanthus Orientalis</i>	Leaves	Acute skin irritation and ulceration of the mouth.
Angels Trumpet <i>Datura Aborea</i> ( <i>D. Candida</i> )	Fruit, seeds and flowers	Dry throat, increasing thirst. Disturbance of vision, giddiness, flushed face, headache, restlessness and staggering, dilation of pupils, fast heart rate (tachycardia), coma and death.
Arum Lily <i>Santedeschia Aethiopica</i>	All parts	Swelling of tongue and throat. Causes severe illness and acute gastric upset.
Autumn Crocus <i>Colchicum Autumnale</i>	All parts	Gastro-intestinal upset, respiratory paralysis, renal damage, exhaustion and shock.
Azalea or Rhododendron	All parts	Nausea, vomiting, depression, difficulty in breathing, coma.
Bird of Paradise <i>Poinciana Gilliesii</i>	Pods and seeds	Vomiting, diarrhoea, drowsiness and vertigo.
Black Locust <i>Robinia Psuedoacacia</i>	All parts	Gastro-intestinal upset, coldness of extremities, heart irregularities, pupil dilation.
Box <i>Buxus Sempervirens</i>	Leaves and twigs	Gastroenteritis, bloody diarrhoea, respiratory failure and convulsions.
Cape Lilac <i>Melia Azedarach</i>	Fruit	Gastro-intestinal distress, bloody stools, excitement or depression. 6-8 fruit can be fatal to a child.
Castor-oil Plant <i>Ricinus Communis</i>	Seeds	Restlessness, cold clammy skin, thirst, rapid pulse, cramps, drowsiness, stuporous, collapse. 2-8 seeds are lethal dose for adult. Can cause a severe allergic reaction.
Cotoneaster	Fruit (red berries)	Intense nausea and vomiting.

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Plant	Toxic part	Symptoms
Daffodil and Jonquil <i>Narcissus Pseudonarcissus</i> and <i>Narcissus jonquilla</i>	Bulbs	Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, trembling and convulsions.
Dumb-Cane <i>Dieffenbachia spp.</i>	All parts	Intense burning and irritation of mouth and tongue. Swelling and accumulation of fluid causes difficulty in swallowing.
Duranta <i>Idurnata Repens</i>	Fruit	Sleepiness, high temperature.
Foxglove <i>Digitalis Purpurea</i>	All parts	Irregular heart beat and pulse. Usually digestive upset and dizziness.
Hemlock <i>Conium Maculatum</i>	All parts	Violent, painful convulsions and a gradual loss of muscle power.
Jessamine <i>Cestrum spp.</i>	All parts	Nausea, pupil dilation, muscular weakness, hallucinations, tachycardia, weak pulse, coma.
Laburnum <i>Laburnum</i> <i>Anagyroides</i>	All parts, especially seeds	Vomiting, purging, contraction of the muscles (tetanic spasms).
Lantana <i>Lantana Camara</i>	Green berries	Not fully documented, but includes muscular weakness and circulatory collapse.
Naked Lady <i>Euphorbia Tirucalli</i>	All parts	Vomiting, purging, delirium, death. Latex sap is an irritant, causes temporary blindness on contact with eyes. Blistering to the skin.
Nightshades	All parts, especially berries	Intense digestive disturbance, affects nervous system.
Oleander <i>Nerium oleander</i> and <i>Thevetia peruviana</i>	All parts	Extremely poisonous! Affects the heart and pulse. Usually causes digestive upset and mental confusion. Ingestion of one leaf or flower can be fatal to a child.
Poinsettia <i>Euphorbia Pulcherrima</i>	Leaves, stalk, sap	Severe nausea if swallowed. Extreme irritation to skin and eyes from latex sap.

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Plant	Toxic part	Symptoms
Rhubarb <i>Rheum Rhaponticum</i>	Leaf blade	Staggering, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea, impaired clotting of blood, coma.
Rhus <i>Toxicodendron Sucedaneum</i>	All parts	Severe irritation and blistering of the skin. Intense swelling of the face that may spread to other parts.
Toadstool	All parts	Intoxication (in a few minutes to two hours), unusual secretion of saliva, sweating, diarrhoea, vomiting and circulatory failure. Mental disturbance, convulsions and coma.
Thorn Apple <i>Datura Stramonium and Jimson Weed</i>	All parts	Abnormal thirst, distorted sight, delirium, incoherence, coma.
Winter Sweet <i>Carissa Spectabilis</i>	All parts	Severe gastro-intestinal irritation, irregular heart beat and pulse.

This information has been adapted from the Home-Safe Play-Safe Healthy Cities Wanneroo project.

For more information, contact:

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