

# Poison Look-Alikes:

## Tips to Prevent Accidental Poisoning *at All Ages*

We often think of poisoning as something that happens to small children, but it's also easy for adults to mix up medications or mistake one product for another. **Poison look-alikes** are potentially harmful substances that can easily be mistaken for safe ones, usually because they look the same or have very similar packaging. Often, they are things that we use every day for cleaning, self-care, or first aid, but if they are used incorrectly or mistaken for something else, they can harm us.

Mix-ups happen often; it is easy to put eardrops into your eyes by mistake, or to grab the tube of first-aid cream instead of the toothpaste. Mistakes like these can cause problems ranging from temporary discomfort, severe illness, permanent injury, or even death.



Photo: Crystal Terhune

**So many products and packages look alike! It can be easy to mistake a potential poison for a safe product that you use every day. In this photo, a cold remedy is packaged the same way as single-serve drink mixes.**

### Poison Look-Alikes:

Potentially harmful products or substances that can be easily mistaken for safe foods, drinks, or other products, usually because the product or the packaging looks similar to the safe product packaging.

There are so many different products on the market today and manufacturers don't make it easy for us to be able to tell them apart. It's interesting to discover how many look-alike products we can find around the house.

### Consider these examples of potential look-alikes:

Product	Potential Look-Alikes
Gummy Candy	Laundry Detergent Pods
	Gummy Vitamins
Parmesan Cheese	Cleanser (similar cans)
Chewing Gum	Nicotine Gum
Blue Sports Drink	Window Cleaner
Chocolate Bar	Chocolate Flavored Laxatives
Cinnamon Candies	Cold or Sinus Tablets
Water	Bleach (in an unmarked container)
Apple Juice	Household Cleaner

**Do you have any of these around your house? What other poison look-alikes can you think of?**

## Now That You Know, What Can You Do?

Anyone can fall victim to poison look-alikes.

Here are some simple prevention tips:

### **Families with Young Children, or Schools and Child Care Centers:**

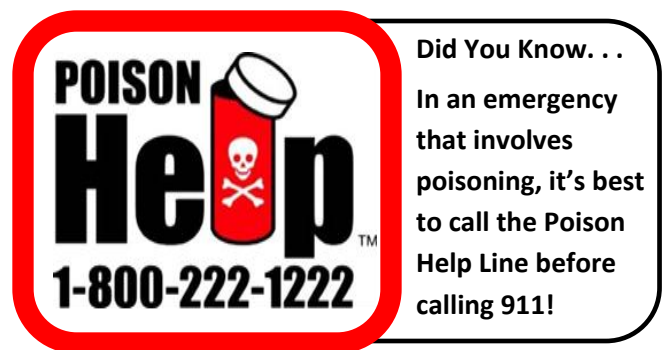
- Store food separately from household cleaners, medicines, and beauty aids so these items won't get mistaken for the wrong product. Being organized can save lives!
- Keep potential poisons out of children's reach and sight. Look around your home and move potential poisons to safe and secure locations (locked, if possible).
- Apply *Mr. Yuk* stickers (or similar warnings) to potentially poisonous products.
- Teach children about poison look-alikes.
- Store products in their original containers, so that if someone is poisoned the product can be identified.

### **Teens and Young Adults:**

- For reliable, anonymous answers to questions about medicines, mix-ups and more, call the Poison Control Center immediately before searching the Internet.
- Download the free Poison Center Help app to have instant access to the Poison Control Center on your Smartphone.
- Visit [www.PoisonsBad.com](http://www.PoisonsBad.com) for more info, ringtones, wallpaper, and social media links.
- When babysitting, be aware. Ask where chemicals are stored and remember that poison look-alikes could be anywhere.

### **Older Adults and/or People with Low Vision:**

- Ask the pharmacy to provide large-print medicine labels and instructions.
- Use a "buddy system"- have a reliable relative or friend help fill your pillbox.
- Organize and store your chemicals, medicines and beauty aids in a way that will prevent common mix-ups, especially for products that look alike or have similar packaging.
- Take medications in a well-lit area. Use glasses or a magnifier to help read labels and instructions.



### **Tips for Everyone:**

- Remember that Poison Control Centers are NOT JUST for emergencies! They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as a resource for help and information.
- Put the Poison Control Center number in your mobile phone's contact list: 1-800-222-1222.
- Share what you know with others! Give them the Poison Control Center number.
- Request free poison prevention materials such as magnets or *Mr. Yuk* stickers by calling the Poison Control Center. Ask for an educator so your call is routed properly!

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