

Poisoning Hazards For Autumn

The **Poison Control Center** is **1-800-222-1222**

Website is: www.poison.com

As summer fades into autumn, the change in the weather can signal a change in potential hazards both in the home and garden. Identifying potential poisoning risks around the home and garden during autumn helps to safeguard all family members and ensures these tasks can be carried out safely.

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Mushrooms

The cooler mornings provide ideal conditions for the proliferation of mushrooms and toadstools in fields and gardens. They can only be identified by an expert - some of the most toxic mushrooms look very similar to edible mushrooms. Even a small ingestion can be very dangerous.

- Never eat mushrooms you have not bought from a supermarket or market garden.
- If you have mushrooms in your garden, do a daily “sweep” and remove them all by hand every morning. It is OK to touch mushrooms, even poisonous ones.

Gardening

Autumn leaves are fun to play in, but fallen plant debris, like leaves and berries, are easy for young children and pets to eat. It is also the time to prune roses and plant bulbs. Many different parts of a plant can be poisonous.

- Now is a good time to learn the names of new and existing plants in your garden, so that the correct information can be given if poisoning should occur
- Rake fallen leaves and berries together and dispose of in your rubbish
- Children should be encouraged to enjoy plants without eating them.
- It is advisable to have plants that are poisonous out of reach of children

Insecticide and fungicide sprays used to ensure plants remain healthy and disease free over winter can also be dangerous if not used with care. Try to avoid chemical exposure in and around your home. For more information visit the **Oregon Environmental Counsel** website at [www. OESonline.org](http://www.OESonline.org)

- Always keep sprays out of reach and sight of children and in their original, labeled, containers.
- Wear protective clothing when using garden sprays and do not apply them on windy days. Be careful to ensure children's toys, sandboxes, bikes or pet food dishes are not sprayed.

Rodenticides

The cooler temperatures cause rodents move indoors, increasing the use of rodenticides by homeowners. Baits can often be picked up by children and pets.

- Consideration should be given to the placement of rodent baits to ensure they are not accessible to children or pets
- Keep the packaging of the product handy so that if a poisoning does occur, the correct advice can be given

Antifreeze

In anticipation of colder driving conditions, coolants such as antifreeze are added to vehicles. Antifreeze poses a serious poisoning risk – even tiny amounts can be dangerous to children, adults and pets.

- Ensure the antifreeze remains in the original container
- Always make sure chemicals are kept well out of the reach of children and pets
- If antifreeze is spilled, make sure it is thoroughly cleaned up; small children and pets can be poisoned by licking residue from the floor

Medicines

Autumn means cold, flu and hay fever medications may become more widely used. As people begin to train for the winter sports season, heat rubs and sports gels are used more frequently. This can increase the risk of accidental overdoses and interactions between medicines.

- It is important when using cold, flu and allergy preparations that the recommended dose is followed and no extra pain relief is taken.
- Many preparations contain the same or similar ingredients (e.g. acetaminophen, paracetamol). Make sure you are not doubling up by checking the packet, and always ask your pharmacist first.
- Ensure the medication is not left where young children can get access such as in a handbag or on a bedside table.

Mothballs

As cooler weather begins, warm clothing may be retrieved, which may have been stored with mothballs. Children can sometimes mistake mothballs for sweets, and serious symptoms can result from even small ingestions. Mothballs are highly toxic and it would be best to keep them out of your home. Ask grandparents if they keep them out of reach. Use shredded Cedar or Cedar Oil as a substitute.

- There are 3 different kinds of mothballs (camphor, naphthalene and paradichlorobenzene), make sure you know what kind you are using
- Make sure children are well supervised during packing and unpacking
- Wash clothes thoroughly after you retrieve them from storage

Autumn Festivities

Many families celebrate Easter with lots of delicious chocolate, as well as enjoying a warming mug of cocoa in the chillier evenings. However, chocolate products are very poisonous to animals, especially dogs, where they can cause serious heart toxicity.

- Never leave chocolate lying around where pets can get to it
- Different types of chocolate (dark, bittersweet, milk, cocoa) can be more or less toxic, make sure you know what kind you have in the house