

# TOXIC TRIVIA

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## Summer Safety

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### Poison Centers are Ready to Handle Medicine Mistakes

One of the common misconceptions surrounding poison centers is that they're aimed primarily at children who've gotten into something they shouldn't have. While poison centers do take such calls, they also take plenty of calls from people who've made mistakes when taking their medicine. In 2008, 10.6 percent of all poison exposures nationally occurred as a result of "therapeutic errors," including taking the wrong medicine or inadvertently taking doses too close together.

The **Indiana Poison Center** offers the following tips aimed at taking medicine safely:

- Keep medicines **locked up** and put them back in the locked place, as soon as you've finished using them.
- "Child resistant caps" only slow children down – **they are not "child proof"**.
- Never take prescription medicine that isn't meant for you, and never give a person medicine not intended for them. **Never take another person's prescription medicine**, even if it's similar to one you may be taking.
- Don't give a child medicine or vitamins intended for adults
- Never use a kitchen spoon to measure liquid medicine - the amount in such a spoon varies widely and the dose will

- not be accurate.
- Make sure after refilling a prescription that the pills look the same as the previous month, and that there is a child-resistant closure on the bottle. If the directions are not clear or seem to have changed, ask the pharmacist or your doctor as soon as you notice it. If side effects occur when taking medicine, call your doctor or pharmacist to check and see if you should stop the drug.
- Some drugs include warnings that they should not be taken with certain drugs, supplements, foods or alcohol. Be sure you know if this applies to your medicines.

people accidentally take medicine intended for their pets, use ear drops in their eyes, or inhale a spray product intended for the nose. This can happen if medicine is taken in the dark or if reading glasses or a magnifier are not used when necessary to read labels.

- Over the counter products can hurt you if you use them the wrong way or take too much. Read all the directions and follow them **exactly**.
- Never guess how to use a product. Using too much or more than one product with the same or similar ingredients (e.g. acetaminophen in cold and cough medicines) can cause problems. **Taking medicines with the same ingredients through your skin and by mouth at the same time can cause an overdose.**

- When taking more than one medicine at a time, use a chart to check off when you take each medicine so you don't take the same medicine twice by mistake.
- When there's a chance that more than one person might give medicine to a child or senior, choose *one person* to do the job to prevent double dosing.
- More is *not* always better. Taking more than directions tell you to can cause serious problems. If the amount you're supposed to take doesn't work – **don't just take more**; call your doctor or pharmacist and ask what you should do.
- Never take medicine in front of children or call it "candy". Children like to copy adults and it can be hard for them to tell the difference between medicine and candy.



- **Check labels every time before using any medicine or household product** to make sure it is what you think it is. Don't rely on how bottles or pills look to identify medicine. Some poisonings have happened when

### Contents

Poison Centers Ready.....

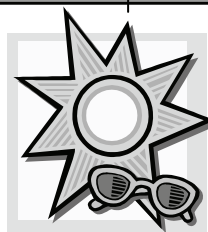
Tips for House Cleaning.....

Dispose of Old Medicine.....

Pool Safety.....

Toxic Trivia answers.....

**Toxic Trivia**  
This issue's  
questions are all  
related to music.



Answers are on  
page 4 - good luck

POISON  
PREVENTION

# TOXIC TRIVIA

1. The death of which famous rock music entertainer, in 1977, was hastened by use of opiates and tranquilizers?

- Keep medicines away from teens and others who may try to take them out of curiosity or for abuse purposes. If there are pain killers or other potent drugs in your home, lock them up separately from other medicines.
- Maintain an up-to-date list of all medicines for each family member, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, as well as supplements. Show the list to your doctor at clinic visits, and each time you go to the pharmacy for refills or to buy a new medicine. Be sure you have any allergies listed as well. Having this information when you travel is also very important.
- When using a medicine “patch,” take off one patch before applying the next one. In the case of topical products, wash off the skin before applying more.
- Don’t flush old medicines down the toilet. Instead, hold them for a local medication disposal event, or place them in the trash (see article on page 3 for safer ways to do this).

If you’re worried or have a question about how to take medicine safely, call your doctor or pharmacist. If you think you may have taken medicine or used a household product incorrectly, call the Indiana Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222**.

## Tips for Safe Housecleaning

Now that warm weather’s here, it’s much easier to open the windows, let the sun shine in and get rid of the dirt that built up over the long cold months of winter.

It’s time to sweep up the dust, pack away those fuzzy sweaters and sort through cluttered closets and drawers.

Believe it or not, this routine is not without dangers. According to American Association of Poison Control Center data, about 90 percent of poison exposures occur at home, and more than 50 percent of those exposures affect children under the age of five.

Household cleaning products are consistently among the top five products that prompt calls to poison centers regarding children five or under. In 2008, only analgesics, or painkillers, and cosmetic products spurred more calls to poison centers



regarding children five or under. Household products accounted for nearly 10 percent of all poison exposures in this age group.

Adults need to be careful as well. In 2008, household cleaning products accounted for eight percent of the calls to poison centers regarding people 20 or older.

The Indiana Poison Center offers the following tips for cleaning safely.







- Never leave children unattended near a cleaning product.
- Keep all cleaning products locked away and out of reach of young children.
- Never mix cleaning products. Doing so may create toxic fumes. Use only one cleaning product at a time.
- Store cleaning products in their original containers and not in empty food and beverage containers or bottles.
- Always read the label instructions to find out how to safely use the product.
- Keep the toll-free national poison emergency phone number **1-800-222-1222** near your phone in case of an unintentional poisoning.
  - Call the poison center immediately if you suspect a child has touched, breathed or swallowed a cleaning product. Calls to **1-800-222-1222** are automatically connected to a specialist in poison information offering free, expert, confidential advice. The specialist will tell you exactly what to do and will follow up with you by phone, if necessary, to provide further assurance.

If you think you’ve been exposed to a poison or have questions about poison safety, call the **Indiana Poison Center** at **1-800-222-1222**.

2. “*The Banana Boat Song*” made popular in the 1960s by Harry Belafonte, mentions a secretive toxic critter. What is this animal?

## What Can I Do With Old And unused Medicine?

Follow these steps to get rid of unused and old medicine:

	<p>Keep medicines in the containers they came in with child-resistant lids firmly in place.</p>
	<p>Remove labels before throwing away the medicine or use a permanent marker to cover any personal information on labels.</p>
	<p>If throwing away liquids, place the liquids in a plastic bag that can be sealed in case of leaks. Wrap glass bottles to prevent breakage.</p> <p>Mix medicines with things like cat litter or coffee grounds so people will be less likely to take them.</p>
	<p>Add some water to pills or capsules to at least partly dissolve them.</p>
	<p>Put the medicine inside a box or bag that doesn't show what's inside.</p>
	<p>Put the medicine in the trash as close to pick up time as possible – <i>do not place in recycling bins.</i></p>

Flushing medicine down the sink or toilet may be bad for the environment. Throwing it away with the trash may cause less pollution, but there is a risk that other people or animals may find it. Privacy may also be a concern if containers have labels with names and other personal information.

**Check with your local waste management district first to see if they have ideas for places to safely dispose of your unwanted medicines.** They may take them at their own facility or know of a local take back event.

If you have no other option, follow the guidelines to the left to more safely dispose of medicine in the trash.

When disposing of medicated patches, fold the patch in two (medicated side should face the inside) before placing it in a bag or container that won't show what's inside. When disposing of patches or any other kind of medication, place the trash at your curb side *as close to pick up time as possible* to reduce the possibility of animals or other people finding the discarded medication.

3. Who is the Tennessee reared Queen of Country Music who as a child, was pulled by her father from a church where she was singing, when the preacher started to handle a poisonous snake?

4. Name the artist or artists who performed each of the following songs that have a toxic reference in the song title:  
A) "Poison Ivy" B) "Poison" C) "Shot of Poison" D) "Lithium"

**Pool Safety**

The heat is overwhelming in most parts of the country now, which means many people are heading to the pool for some fun, relaxation and for relief from the summer heat. But sunburn isn't the only danger – it's important to keep in mind that chlorine, which protects pools and hot tubs from bacteria, can also be dangerous if used the wrong way

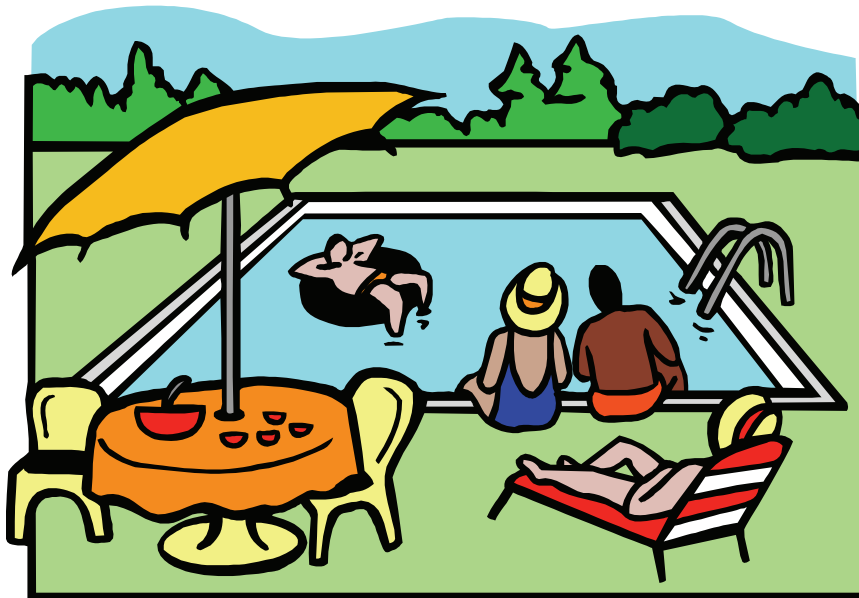
The Indiana Poison Center offers the following tips aimed at keeping swimming pools and hot tubs safe this summer:

- If you have a swimming pool or hot tub treated with chlorine, make sure the pH levels are where they need to be at all times. If pH levels aren't maintained properly, harmful bacteria can persist even in water that has been treated with chlorine. Monitor pH levels to make sure that chlorine is doing its job, and follow the manufacturer's directions for safe usage and storage. Use chlorine as directed.

5. In 1791, a famous musician died and poisoning was suspected. Later, one of his chief rivals, Antonio Salieri, is reported to have confessed to poisoning him. Who was this famous composer?

- Don't breathe in chlorine fumes and avoid consuming, ingesting or touching the substance with your bare hands. Remember that while chlorine properly used makes pools safer, improper use can be dangerous.
- Do not mix chlorine with other chemicals. Some chemicals are highly dangerous when combined.
- Do not mix different forms of chlorine together.
- Keep chlorine out of the reach of children and pets.
- Keep chlorine away from other combustible substances.
- Do not remove chlorine from its original container for storage - if you do, someone might drink the chlorine by mistake.
- Keep the poison control number handy in case of questions or concerns: **1-800- 222-1222**.

- Be aware of the risks associated with swimming in chlorinated water. Exposure to chlorine can irritate skin and trigger rashes including eczema, can cause burning, itchy eyes and can trigger or aggravate bronchial problems including asthma.
- If you're not comfortable storing chlorine on your property or you would prefer to avoid treating your swimming pool with chemicals you should consider hiring an outside professional to do the job.



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Contact Barbara Cole at 317-962-9248 or [bcole@iuhealth.org](mailto:bcole@iuhealth.org) if you have questions regarding duplication of information.

**Answers to Toxic Trivia Quiz**

1. Elvis Presley
2. A Tarantula
3. Dolly Parton
4. A) The Coasters
- B) Bel Biv DeVoe
- C) Lita Ford
- D) Nirvana
5. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart