



# THE POISON CONTROL CENTER

*High Intermediate ESL Level*



## I. Pre-reading

Have you ever heard of the Poison Control Center? What does this Center do? Is there one in your country?

## II. Vocabulary

**significant**  
**exposure**  
**vast**

**unintentional**  
**curious**  
**hygiene**

**lead**  
**unconscious**  
**convulsions**

## III. Reading

Poisoning continues to be a **significant** cause of injury, illness and death throughout the United States. According to the most recent statistics from the American Association of Poison Control Centers, U.S. poison control centers handle one poison **exposure** every 15 seconds. Most occur in the home, usually between 4 and 10 p.m., with the **vast** majority **unintentional**.

Nationally over two million phone calls are placed to poison control centers each year by adults seeking emergency treatment advice. Nearly 30 children die every year due to accidental poisonings.

### Who gets poisoned?

This year in the United States, 53% of poison exposures will occur in children under six years old.

### Why children?

Young children are **curious**. They will eat or drink almost anything, even if it doesn't taste good.



## What are common poisons?

**Carbon monoxide** is a deadly gas which is odorless.

**Food poisoning** is caused by bacteria in foods.

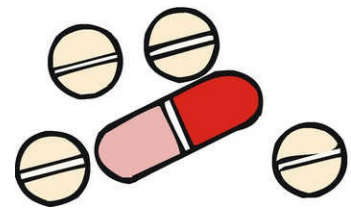
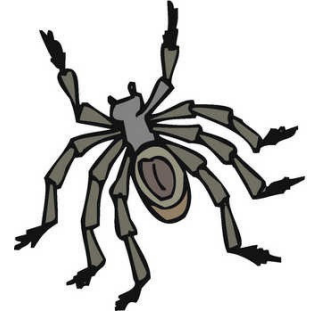
**Household products** are poisonous if eaten or drunk. There are many products lining the shelves of the supermarket that are designed to improve health, **hygiene** and a sense of comfort. They can be harmful if not used properly.

**Bites** from insects or spiders can be poisonous.

**Medicines** used incorrectly can be dangerous.

**Plants** can be poisonous if eaten or touched.

**Lead** in paint is dangerous, especially to children.



## What can I do if I suspect poisoning?

- Remain calm.
- For **unconscious** persons, or one with **convulsions** or has difficulty breathing, **call 911**.
- Otherwise, call the Poison Control Center toll free at 1-800-222-1222.

## What happens when I call the poison control center?



Specialists in poison information who are physicians, registered nurses or pharmacists with special training in toxicology, the study of poisons, handle all calls. They can determine what is potentially poisonous by asking very specific questions. This is not a waste of time! Only a careful evaluation of all information can determine if a case is serious. The Poison Control Center staff will tell you what to do.

#### IV. Post-reading

Choose the correct answer.

1. Which product improves your hygiene?  
aspirin                      deodorant                      paint
2. Which product improves your health?  
vitamin C tablets      poison ivy                      lipstick
3. Which children get poisoned most often?  
teenagers                      over age eight                      under age six
4. When do most poisonings occur?  
6 to 10 a.m.                      4 to 10 p.m.                      midnight
5. Where do most poisonings occur?  
in the car                      at work                      at home
6. How many calls does the Poison Control Center receive each year?  
under 2 hundred      over 2 million                      just 1 million



#### True or False

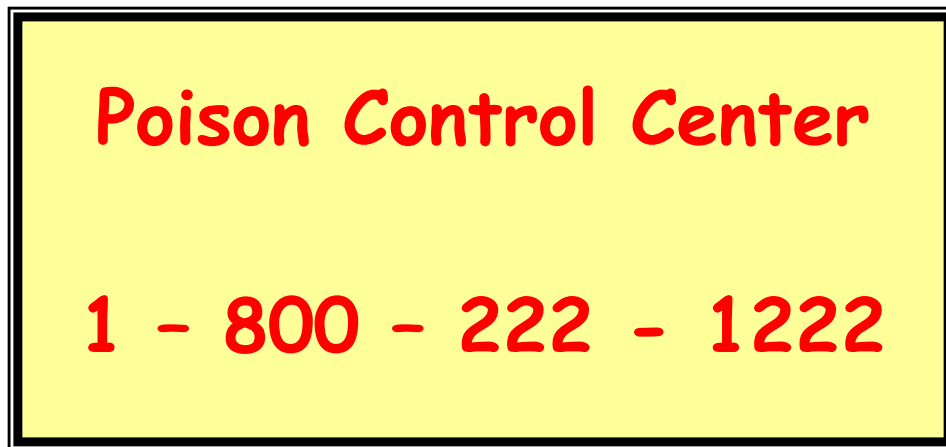
1. T F The Poison Control center will send you medicine.
2. T F Operators at the Poison Control Center are all nurses.
3. T F There is no charge for a call to the Poison Control Center.
4. T F Children will never drink anything that tastes bad.
5. T F Toxicology is the study of poisons.
6. T F Insect bites can be poisonous.
7. T F Carbon monoxide smells bad.



## V. Activities

If you are working with a tutor or a partner, discuss your answers.

1. Explain the Poison Control Center to your family. Put the telephone number in your address book.
2. What are the most common sources of poison? Look around your home to find sources.
3. Use a search engine to find more information on poisons, control centers and emergency measures.



*Cut out this phone number and put it with your important phone numbers.*

