

# Chemical hazards in the home

## Attention getter

Generally speaking the law applies to the action or transgression and does not depend on the place where the offence was committed. Thus when the law states that poisons should be kept locked up it applies equally to the home and to the workplace. Failing to comply with legal requirements can result in prosecution.

## Point

One can rarely tell the dangers of a liquid from its colour or container. Children can easily be deceived into thinking that any liquid stored in a cold drink bottle (even if it has an unusual colour) is safe for drinking. Clear liquids are particularly dubious and one has to question the wisdom of adults who store paraffin in cold drink bottles.

## Reason

Once the child believes that the bottle contains a beverage it is already too late. Even a deep sniff of paraffin fumes can have catastrophic effects on the lining of the child's lungs. Statistics show that as much as 60% of all acute poisonings in South Africa can be blamed on paraffin. Many other substances used in households have similar effects and almost any liquid can have negative effects: dishwashing liquid, drain cleaner, wood and metal polishes, spirits, liquid scourers, liquid detergents and softeners, bleaches, etc.

## Example

More paraffin poisonings occur in summer than in winter because children who are hot and thirsty are eager to have a drink of "water" and, because the paraffin is sometimes stored in cold drink bottles, the tragic mistake is made.

## Action

1. Be aware of all the hazardous substances in your home. You should know what the side effects of each are and what emergency treatment can be given.
2. Make sure the telephone numbers of your doctor, the ambulance and the nearest poison information centre are near the phone and easily accessible.
3. If your child has taken a liquid or an unfamiliar pill, make sure you take the container or pill box with you to hospital so that the substance can easily be identified.
4. Remember to mark all vessels containing hazardous substances clearly. If possible use child-proof containers. Store these substances under lock and key, out of the reach of children and train your children not to drink or touch any liquids unless an adult is present.

# Chemiese gevare in die huis

## Aandagtrekker

In die algemeen is die wet van toepassing op die daad ongeag die plek waar die oortreding plaasvind. As die wet dus bepaal dat gifstowwe toegesluit moet word geld dit vir beide die werk- en die woonplek. Versuim om die wet na te kom kan lei tot vervolging.

## Punt

Dit is bra onmoontlik om die gevare van 'n vloeistof aan die hand van sy kleur of houer te bepaal. Kinders kan maklik bedrieg word deur te dink dat enige vloeistof wat in 'n koeldrankbottel gehou word (selfs al het dit 'n ongewone kleur) veilig is om te drink. Helder vloeistowwe is besonder bedrieglik en 'n mens kan nie anders as om die wysheid van volwassenes wat paraffien in koeldrankbottels berg, te betwyfel nie.

## Rede

As 'n kind glo dat die inhoud van die bottel drinkbaar is, is dit alreeds te laat. Selfs al word dit nie gedrink nie, is een diep asemteug genoeg om katastrofiese skade aan die kind se longvlies te rig. Statistieke bewys dat soveel as 60% van alle akute vergiftigings in Suid-Afrika te wyte is aan paraffien. Baie ander stowwe wat daaglik in huishoudings gebruik word het soortgelyke gevolge: opwasmiddels, rioolreinigingsmiddels, hout- en metaalpolitoere, spiritus, vloeibare skuurmiddels, vloeibare seep en versagmiddels, bleikmiddels, ens.

## Voorbeeld

Meer paraffienvergiftigings vind in somermaande plaas omdat kinders wat warm en dors is, gretig is om 'n slukkie "water" te drink, en omdat paraffien somtyds in koeldrankbottels geberg word, is tragiese gevolge aan die orde van die dag.

## Aksie

1. Wees bewus van al die gevaarhoudende stowwe in u huis. U behoort ook al die nuwe-effekte van elke stof te ken asook watter noodbehandeling toegepas kan word in geval van inname.
2. Maak seker dat die telefoonnommers van u dokter, die ambulans en die naaste gifstofinformasiesentrum naby u telefoon en maklik bekombaar is.
3. As 'n kind 'n vloeistof of vreemde pil ingeneem het, maak seker dat u die houer saamneem hospitaal toe om identifisering van die stof te vergemaklik.
4. Onthou om alle houters wat gevaarlike stowwe bevat, duidelik te merk. Gebruik peuterbestande houters indien moontlik. Hierdie stowwe behoort agter slot en grendel en buite bereik van kinders geberg te word en hulle behoort verbied te word om vloeistowwe te drink of met die houters te peuter sonder die teenwoordigheid van 'n volwassene.