

First Aid For Plant Poisoning

General Guidelines

If you stay calm then the person you are helping will also stay calm.

Most plant poisons don't act immediately, take the time to get the correct advice before acting!

Check to see if the person is conscious by talking to them. If you don't get a reply, check that they are breathing and have a pulse.

If the person is unconscious, immediately call for an ambulance. If you know how, put the person into the recovery position or perform CPR as necessary.

If the person is conscious, call the National Poisons Centre immediately (**0800 POISON - 764 766**) so the correct first aid can be given.

Try to identify the plant involved, a garden centre is useful for this, ideally prior to poisoning occurring.

Children should not be put to bed or given anything to eat after swallowing any plant without first contacting the Poisons Centre or a doctor.

Good Advice

The correct identification of the plant is very important!

Know the plants and trees in your garden, and choose non toxic plants wherever possible. The National Poisons Centre is not able to identify plant material or berries over the phone at the time of poisoning! If you are unsure, take a piece of the plant to a Garden Centre or Botanist.

Children should be encouraged to enjoy the plants in the garden without eating them.

Know the phone number for the Poisons Centre (**0800 POISON - 764 766**) and your own family doctor.



National Poisons Centre

For Poisons Prevention Information

www.poisons.co.nz

For Poisons Advice

Telephone (24 hours a day)

0800 POISON

(0800 764 766)

National Poisons Centre

Dunedin School of Medicine

PO Box 913

Dunedin New Zealand

Email: poisons@otago.ac.nz



National Poisons Centre

Poisonous Plants in New Zealand



- The top plants of concern
- General plant poisoning prevention tips
- What to do in case of poisoning involving plants



GENERAL INFORMATION

Poisonous Plants

There are many plants in the garden that are regarded as internal poisons and can cause toxic effects if parts of the plant are eaten.

Plants that are grown in areas where young children visit need to be chosen with care, and removed if necessary.

Non-Poisonous Plants

Although not specifically “poisonous” some plants can be irritating to the mouth and throat. Children particularly dislike plants that taste bitter and may become distressed. If this happens, give the child a small drink or something to suck on (such as an ice-block, lolly or wet face-cloth).

Non-poisonous plants can cause nausea, or even some vomiting and diarrhea when swallowed because the stomach is not used to the plant.

Many plants in the household garden can also cause effects to the skin. These can be mechanically irritating (e.g. thorns or prickles), or have sap that can cause pain, burns or dermatitis. Some plants can cause an allergic reaction when swallowed or on the skin.

POISON PREVENTION

Garden Plants

Children should be encouraged to enjoy the plants in the garden without eating them.

Keep plants which are poisonous out of reach of children.

Clear away berries, flowers and other plant material which fall onto lawns or garden paths so that children do not put them in their mouth.

Know the names of the plants in your garden, and your pot plants, so that the correct information can be given if it is needed.

Some plant material can produce poisonous fumes if burned, e.g. oleander. Do not burn any poisonous plant unless you are sure it is safe to do so.

Some poisonous plants may have educational value (e.g. swan plant) - These plants can be grown in homes with small children, providing children are supervised around the plant, and caregivers are aware the plant is poisonous, and take all necessary precautions .

FIRST AID FOR PLANT POISONING

In all cases of poisoning, contact the National Poisons Centre (0800 POISON - 764 766) or a doctor.

If A Plant is Swallowed

It is not advisable to make the person vomit. This may even be dangerous.

Giving large amounts of fluids to drink is not helpful. If there is a burning sensation, a small amount of water or milk may help. A good amount is quarter to half a cup for a child, and a cup for an adult.

If a person develops an all-over rash, a temperature, or breathing difficulties, seek medical attention immediately.

Skin Exposure

Immediately flush the area with large amounts of water. Remove any further contamination such as sticky sap, spikes, thorns or leaves.

If a large area is involved, the skin is damaged or any signs of allergy or infection develop (e.g. swelling, rash, difficulty breathing or swallowing) seek medical attention .

Sap in the Eye

Flush the eye immediately with lots of water for at least 15 minutes, and sometimes longer. Use a glass or low pressure running water. Remove contact lenses while flushing .

Do not use an eye bath or chemical such as Optrex.

Always allow the running water to run away from the nose to the ear so that the chemical is not flushed into the other eye. Carefully lift the eye lids so that the water can flush underneath.

After flushing, go to the nearest hospital or medical centre so the eye can be assessed

Inhaling Smoke or Pollen

Protect yourself. Remove the person from the source as quickly as possible, making sure they can get plenty of fresh air.

If the person can not breath, call an ambulance.



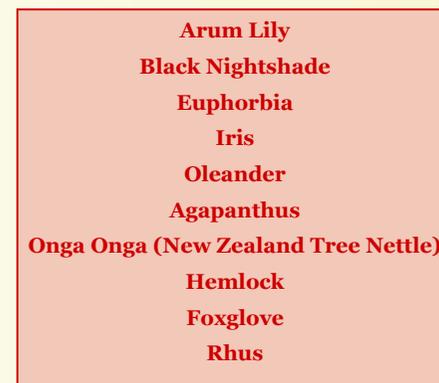
POISONOUS PLANTS IN NEW ZEALAND

Plant Calls

Plant poisoning enquiries make up almost 10% of total calls to the centre. Plant calls are the third most frequent exposure enquiry (following therapeutic and household agent exposures). Approximately 60 % of plant calls are due to childhood exposures. *

Our Top Ten Poisonous Plants

These are plants that are consistently involved in unintentional or childhood poisonings as well as plants resulting in the manifestation of sometimes very serious symptoms.



This list is not an exhaustive list of plants that can cause poisoning. Many other plants are also poisonous, and for more specific information on other plants that may be poisonous, contact the National Poisons Centre with the botanical name.

Mushrooms & Toadstools

Fungi can be very toxic and it is very difficult to identify the toxic fungi from the non-toxic ones. Any ingestion of any mushroom requires medical attention.

Each morning perform a visual sweep of the garden area, and remove any fungi that have popped up over night.

For more general information about poisonous plants and fungi visit www.poisons.co.nz

* Plant statistics compiled from all calls between 1998 to 2002 .