

Beware of Poisonous Houseplants

Plants are among the most common household substances that children may eat. But, did you know that some common indoor and outdoor houseplants are poisonous? In fact, some very common houseplants are the leading causes of poisoning in children under 6 years old.

To protect our children, we need to know which plants are poisonous and keep them out of the reach. The National Health and Safety Performance Standards (Caring for Our Children) also calls for forbidding poisonous or potentially harmful plants in any part of a child care facility that is accessible to children.

Poisonous plants

Plants are regarded as poisonous or toxic when they cause some type of problem or reaction. Reactions can range from mild to serious. Symptoms may vary from a mild stomachache, skin rash, and burning or swelling of the mouth and throat to severe vomiting and diarrhea, involvement of the liver, heart, kidneys, other organs, and coma.

Common poisonous California houseplants

Determining whether or not your houseplant is toxic may be difficult. You may call your local poison control center and request a list of poisonous plants common in your area. If you do not know the name of a plant in or around your home, take a piece of the plant to a plant nursery for identification.

Tips for prevention

- Keep all plants away from small children.
- Check your home, child care environment and yard

for unsafe plants. Keep any unknown plant out of children's reach.

- Place plants behind a glass enclosure to keep children from touching them.
- Safely dispose of cuttings, trimmings and leaves from potentially harmful plants so children do not have access to them.
- Teach children never to pick and eat anything from a plant without your permission, no matter how it looks.
- Supervise children carefully outdoors.

When should you call poison control?

If you suspect a child has ingested a poisonous plant, do the following:

- Remove any remaining plant parts from the mouth.
- If the victim is choking and cannot breathe, call 9-1-1.
- Otherwise, call the Poison Control Center at (800) 222-1222.
- If you are advised to go to an emergency room for treatment, take the plant or a part of the plant with you, not just a single leaf or berry.



California Childcare Health
Program UCSF School of Nursing
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Common houseplants that can be highly toxic		
Plant	Poisonous Parts	Complications
Castor Bean (castor oil plant)	Seeds are beanlike pod	Stomach irritation, diarrhea, abdominal pain, increased heart rate, profuse sweating, collapse, convulsions and death.
Dumbcane (Dieffenbachia)	Roots, leaves, stems	Mouth and throat irritation, possibly stomach irritation, diarrhea (rarely).
English Ivy (Hedera helix)	Leaves and berries	Oral and stomach irritation, diarrhea, breathing problems, coma, death.
Jerusalem Cherry (Solanum pseudocapsicum)	Mature and immature fruit, leaves	Abdominal pains, gastroenteritis and vomiting.
Mistletoe	Berries	Diarrhea and irregular pulse.
Oleander (Nerium oleander)	The entire plant is toxic	Gastrointestinal irritation, cardiac abnormalities, death (may be sudden).
Philodendron	All parts, especially leaves	Stomach irritation, abdominal pain, abnormal heart rate and rhythm, seizures, coma, death.
Rhododendron	All parts	Vomiting, seizures and paralysis.