Drug or Toxin Ingestion (Child)

Your child has taken a medication or product that was:
- Not meant for him or her.
- Taken in large enough amounts to possibly be dangerous.
- Taken accidentally, as a drug experiment, or as a recreational drug.

Your child took a substance today, but it is felt at this time that it is safe for them to go home and be observed.

Symptoms depend on the material ingested, but a few common ingestions with their related problems are:
- *Methyl alcohol*: increased acid in the blood , vision loss, mental status changes.
- *Aspirin (salicylates)*: vomiting, increased acid in the blood in the preschool age group.
- *Iron tablets*: vomiting, possibly intestinal bleeding, diarrhea, mental status changes, shock (a fall in blood pressure), death.
- *Lead*: vomiting, constipation, belly pain, mental status changes.
- *Street drugs*: symptoms vary with the drug taken.
- Materials taken in suicide attempts.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis is usually made from the history, physical findings, and laboratory results. In many cases, your caregiver can identify the drug or substance in the patient's blood or urine.

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on the ingestion. Many substances can be partially treated by forced vomiting. Some drugs can be removed by:
- Causing a more rapid movement through the bowel.
- *Hemodialysis* (cleaning blood).
- *Peritoneal dialysis* (cleaning of the blood that circulates through the abdomen).
- Often, failure of important organs (such as liver or kidney) must be treated as well.

Careful attention will be paid to your child's airway, breathing, and circulation. Your child may need treatment with fluid and *electrolytes* (salts in the blood) for acidosis, alkalosis, or shock. These are conditions that can occur in drug or toxin ingestions. **When you come upon a child or other person with suspected toxic ingestion, contact your local emergency medical service (911 in the US), a poison center, or a physician immediately. Prompt aid is important!**

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION (EVEN AFTER CALLING A POISON CENTER) IF:

- There are signs of continued feeling sick to your stomach and vomiting.
- There are problems that seem to be worsening since first examined.
- There are behavioral changes in your child.

Document Released: 12/08/2003 Document Re-Released: 05/06/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.