

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Tots tasting toothpaste?



What would you do if you walked into the bathroom and saw your child's face smeared with toothpaste and the open tube stuck in his mouth?

Approximately 10 times per month, we receive a phone call from rightfully worried moms or dads because their child was playing with the toothpaste and swallowed an unknown amount.

We all want our kids to enjoy brushing their teeth for so many obvious reasons. And toothpaste companies have made this a lot easier with a variety of products. From the Sponge Bob Square Pants tropical-flavored paste to the Disney Princess bubblegum-flavored paste to the Crest Kids Cavity Protection Sparkle Fun toothpaste, they all simply taste really good to children. But too much paste can be a problem.

Most of these toothpastes contain sodium fluoride which reacts in the stomach with digestive juices to produce a highly damaging *hydrogen fluoride*. This may cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pains. In severe poisonings, low blood pressure and irregular heartbeat may develop. So it's right to be concerned if your youngster decides to eat the paste instead of brushing and spitting it out.

Thankfully, the amount of toothpaste a child eats is usually not enough to require a visit to the emergency room. If a child accidentally eats toothpaste containing sodium fluoride, it usually does not present serious risk, unless the amount of fluoride swallowed is more than 5 milligram per kilogram of body weight. Fluoride toothpaste typically contains a maximum of 1 milligram of fluoride per gram of toothpaste. But, don't worry about doing the math! *Just call the poison center, and we will figure it out for you*

Call your poison center if your child eats toothpaste, and let the pharmacist or poison specialist do the calculation and assessment. We may be able to recommend simple, effective home remedies. Our experts take the guesswork out of the situation- what is dangerous and what's not. Call us. It is what we are here for.

Call the toll-free national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.