

POISONology

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

Ipecac: Not a good idea



Ipecac syrup was approved by the FDA in 1965 as an over-the-counter product to cause vomiting in patients who swallowed poisons and drug overdoses.

In 2003, the American Academy of Pediatrics announced that it was no longer recommending that the public keep ipecac in the home or use it for poisonings. This came in response to evidence that it did not change patient outcomes.

A few years later, an advisory panel to the FDA recommended that ipecac be moved to prescription-only status. In 2009, ipecac was given to less than 0.03% of all patients reported by U.S. poison centers in the National Poison Data System annual report, compared to 15% of patients in 1985. The last remaining manufacturer of ipecac syrup discontinued the product in late 2010.

So, if someone accidentally swallows something that is possibly poisonous, **call the poison center right away. Do NOT try to make them vomit.** It may not be necessary to cause vomiting because:

- The substance isn't poisonous, or
- The person didn't swallow enough to be harmful, or
- It is dangerous for the patient to bring the substance back up.

You also may waste valuable time if you try to stimulate before calling for expert advice.

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions, call the tollfree 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.