



Media Release

For Release – Tuesday 29th July 2003

Over the counter medications require safe handling

Kidsafe WA, SGIO and the WA Poisons Information Centre have combined to issue a warning on over the counter medications. The warning follows a number of incidents where young children have accessed and consumed over the counter medications. In the financial year 2000 –0, 506 West Australian children aged 0 – 14 years were admitted to hospital as a result of unintentional poisoning. Sixty percent (299) of these occurred in the home and 74% (375) were children aged 0 – 4 years.

“Most people have an awareness that a prescription medication is dangerous if more than the recommended dosage is taken or if it is taken by people for whom it is not prescribed,” said Sue Wicks, Executive Officer of Kidsafe WA “ however when it comes to over the counter medications, there seems to be less awareness and therefore more complacency in the handling and storage of these medications. In many cases, this belief may be supported by the fact that many over the counter medications do not have child resistant closures”

Cherry Alford, Head of Department, from the WA Poisons Information Centre, says that over the counter medications can have consequences as serious as those associated with prescription medicines, when taken inappropriately.

"Because a medication is available over the counter, doesn't mean it has less potential for toxicity in toddlers. There are some antidiarrhoeals, antihistamines and analgesics which are very small tablets, some brightly coloured, making them very attractive and easy for a toddler to swallow. Some medications have delayed effects, so the exposure may go unnoticed for hours until unusual symptoms appear requiring emergency treatment. The WA Poisons Information Centre receives about

Kidsafe WA

PO Box D184, PERTH, WA 6001.

Tel: (08) 9340 8509

Thomas St & Roberts Rd, SUBIACO, WA 6008

Fax: (08) 9340 8041

Email: kidsafe@kidsafewa.com.au

12,700 calls annually related to poisoning incidents of children aged 1–4 years. In this group, the greatest percentage of calls to the WA Poisons Information Centre involves medications, with the peak age being 2 years.

Michelle Greenfield, whose two year old daughter recently overdosed herself on an over the counter anti histamine, has first hand experience of how quickly a child can access and consume medications. After administering the medication to her daughter, Ms Greenfield turned to get the child a drink of water. In the time that she turned away, the child climbed on the bench, removed the cap and drank from the bottle. Fortunately for Mrs Greenfield and her daughter there were no serious consequences other than 6 hours of observation in hospital.

The message is simple says Ms Wicks, “Keep all medicines securely locked up and away when not in use. When they are in use, always keep them in your hand and lock them away promptly when finished with.”

If you suspect that your child has taken medicine that was not intended for them, immediately take the child and the medicine with you to the phone and call the WA Poisons Information Centre on 131126. Poisons information staff will advise on emergency first aid and tell you whether or not your child needs to be taken to hospital for further observation or treatment.

SGIO, in its focus on injury prevention, is very proud to partner Kidsafe WA to raise awareness of this issue,” said Garry Moore, State Manager of SGIO. “Poisoning among children is one of the National Injury Prevention Priorities for 2001 – 2003.”

End

Media Contacts:

Sue Wicks, Executive Officer, Kidsafe WA	0409 533 789
Cherry Alford, Head of Department, Poisons Information Centre	9346 1942
Alison Clarke, SGIO	0411 013 039

Kidsafe WA

PO Box D184, PERTH, WA 6001.
Tel: (08) 9340 8509

Thomas St & Roberts Rd, SUBIACO, WA 6008
Fax: (08) 9340 8041
Email: kidsafe@kidsafewa.com.au