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IPC Cleaning Product Exposures Up 30%

COVID-19 Pandemic Causes Surge in Exposures reported to Nation's Oldest Poison Center

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) urges people to use caution with cleaning products, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to IPC data, exposures to cleaning products are up 30%, compared to last year, related to novel coronavirus transmission precautions and concerns.

Examples of exposures the IPC is managing include:

- People using non-traditional chemicals to wash their hands (e.g. bleach, hydrogen peroxide, wipes, etc.) instead of regular hand soap resulting in rash/irritation and cracked skin.
- People using chemicals (e.g. bleach, wipes, cleaning powders) to wash their groceries, including produce and are then concerned about toxicity upon ingestion;
- Mixing cleaning chemicals together and inadvertently producing toxic gas; and
- Pediatric exposures to cleaning products left open/unattended.

“It is critical that consumers read all cleaning product labels carefully before use and heed any warnings,” says IPC Assistant Vice President Carol DesLauriers, Pharm.D. “While good hand hygiene and household disinfecting efforts are important in the fight against COVID-19, people must remember to use cleaning products for their intended use. If there is any doubt about the safe use of cleaning products, call the IPC for guidance.”

While many people are using the stay-at-home order to tackle spring cleaning, in conjunction with disinfecting to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the IPC offers the following tips for poison-proofing your home:

- Whenever using cleaning products, always read the product label first and use the product according to the label directions;
- Keep all cleaning products in their original containers with original labels;
- Store cleaning products out of sight, in locked cabinets;

- Keep all household cleaning products and other potentially harmful products separated from food products;
- Never leave a cleaning product open and unattended;
- When using cleaning products, work in well-ventilated areas; and
- Dispose of cleaning products according to the instructions on the label or at your community chemical waste drop-off site.

The good news is that approximately 90% of poison exposures can be treated safely and effectively at home, by calling the IPC at 800-222-1222 and providing the name of the poisonous substance and the approximate amount involved in the exposure.

In case of a poisoning exposure, follow these first-aid steps, then call the IPC:

- **Swallowed:** Give a few sips of water to drink. If the patient is unconscious, call 911 or take them to the nearest hospital emergency department. Never try to chemically neutralize any poison.
- **Skin:** Remove contaminated clothing and wash skin gently with soap and cool water.
- **Eyes:** Rinse eyes with lukewarm water for 15 minutes.
- **Fumes:** Remove patient to fresh air, taking care not to become exposed yourself. If the patient is not breathing, call 911 and start artificial respiration and continue until medical help arrives.

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 800-222-1222. The call is free and confidential. For more information, visit the IPC's website:

<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/>

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.