



### Celebrating National Poison Prevention Week: Reflecting On a Near Tragedy That Happened In Seconds

May 22, 2008 started out like a “typical” Thursday – our oldest to school, a few errands and back home for yard work. Then two-year old, Katelynn couldn’t wait to help plant flowers in our new flowerbed. We went about the morning moving dirt, planting flowers and seeds and straitening our edging. We went in the house for dinner and to lay Katelynn down for a nap. The next few minutes changed the way we thought about our potentially poisonous products forever.

I had been researching some seeds I’d been given for a few days and had decided that since they were poisonous (I later found out *how* poisonous) I didn’t want to plant them. I threw them in the garbage and went about getting dinner warmed up for my daughter and me. I put Katelynn’s dinner in the microwave, punched in 1 minute 30 seconds and ran to the other room to grab some papers. When I came back to the kitchen, I noticed a little black shell on the counter. As I examined it closer, I soon realized it was one of the seeds I’d thrown in the garbage. I opened the garbage and found only 2 of the 3 castor bean seeds still in the baggie. I quickly asked Katelynn if she’d eaten one and she replied that she had but spit it out because “that jellybean tasted yucky”. I could only find half the seed and remembered that Poison Control might be able to tell me what to do.

I quickly called Poison Control at their universal number: 1.800.222.1222. When I called and explained that I could only find half of the seed, they told me to bring her to the nearest emergency room as soon as possible, and they would call ahead to let them know we were on our way. The next hour seemed to last an eternity. We quickly drove to town with Katelynn singing “Itsy Bitsy Spider” to me so I could keep her awake, once in the ER we were taken quickly to a room where the ER physician assessed her and made it clear this was serious. If castor bean seeds are ingested they can cause massive internal bleeding. We got Katelynn to drink activated charcoal to bind any of the seed in her system and then we were admitted to the hospital for observation.

Luckily our story has a happy ending, Katelynn began to feel like a pampered princess in the hospital with everyone coming to see her, food delivered to her bedside and terrific care from everyone. And we now have a healthy respect for poison dangers. Here are so tips that we like to share, along with our friends at Safe Kids Grand Forks, about poison safety:

Kids are curious and like to play and explore their environment. Oftentimes, they learn about their environment by putting things in their mouths, even things that don’t belong there. They also mistake items such as the seeds I spoke of, or medication as “candy” or other things that are okay to eat. This can pose a danger to them if eaten.

Kids have a different vantage point of their world than we do. We need to be careful with things stored down low at their eye level and with things that they can climb to reach. It is best to make sure that anything that could potentially be poisonous be kept out of sight and reach of young kids, preferably behind a door or drawer with a cabinet lock on it.

Having the National Poison Control Center number handy is helpful so you have it in the event of an emergency. The number is free-of-charge to call, is staffed by poison experts 24 hours per day and will offer great advice on what to do if someone you love ingests, breaths in or touches something that is poisonous.

Remember, kids act fast and so the adults who are taking care of them need to assure that the home or environment in which they play is safe from things that could pose a poison danger. Kids act fast but so do poisons. Keep them stored safely or get rid of them if you no longer need the medication or product in your home.

Medications are the leading cause of poisoning in children so while they can be good for a heart condition, your pain or other medical needs, think of them also as a poisonous product and keep them out of kid’s site and reach.

I am the mom to that now grown teenage daughter and also a member of Safe Kids Grand Forks. I encourage you to follow the tips provided here and also reach out to Safe Kids if you are in need of free cabinet locks or would like a Poison Center sticker or magnet for your home. They can be reached at 701.780.1489 or [safekids@altru.org](mailto:safekids@altru.org).

Gratefully provided by:

Danielle and Katelynn

