

CAMPHOR

CAMPHOR CAN BE DANGEROUS TO YOUR CHILD!

What is Camphor?



Camphor is made from the leaves and bark of a tree (*cinnamomum camphora*) and a turpentine oil. It is usually sold as an oil, cream, or solid block. It is most often used in over-the-counter remedies for cough and cold. Since 1983, the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned the sale of products with more than 11% camphor - but many of these products continue to be sold. The most common ways camphor is used in homes is rubbed onto skin or applied to a cloth to breath the vapors. It might also be used scattered around as a pesticide.

How can my child be exposed to Camphor?

Children can get very sick if they eat or drink a camphor product or a large amount is absorbed through the skin. Even if a child spits it out, just putting camphor in the mouth can expose a child to dangerous amounts of camphor. One of the most common ways for a child to be exposed is when he or she is given camphor oil to drink by mistake instead of another medicine such as castor oil. Very young children are most at risk for serious medical problems, but people of any age can be poisoned.

Exposure to very high levels of camphor can cause stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, irritability, seizures, unconsciousness, and even death.



What can I do to protect my child from Camphor?

Children can become seriously ill if they put camphor in their mouths, swallow it, or are exposed to high levels of the vapor. To avoid health risks, follow these steps:

- ◆ Keep all camphor products out of the reach of children and never put camphor in a person's mouth.
- ◆ Never use a product without a label listing ingredients, manufacturer's name, and directions - these products are illegal and unsafe - use only FDA approved products.
- ◆ Follow all label directions when using camphor products and talk to your doctor before using them on very young children.
- ◆ Do not heat camphor products, put them in a humidifier, or spread them around as a pesticide.

What should I do if my child is poisoned?

If you think that your child has been poisoned, call poison control right away at 1-800-222-1222.

If you have questions about camphor or a particular product, please talk with your health care provider or call the Boston Public Health Commission at (617) 534-5966.



Boston Public Health Commission
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Boston, MA 02118
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Barbara Ferrer, Executive Director
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Please call the Environmental Hazards
Program for more information
617-534-5966