

EMERGENCIES IN THE HOME

WHAT do you have in your medicine cupboard making a hazard for any young child that can climb up and open it if unlocked? I guess some of these: laxatives, tonics containing strychnine, cough syrups containing codeine, liniments, oil of wintergreen, sleeping pills, boracic acid, acids in disinfectants such as carbolic or lysol, iodine, antihistamine pills or nasal drops or douches, iron pills and other medicines as social security left-overs. Well, they can all poison a child.

What of your kitchen storeroom or washhouse? You probably have cleaning fluids, washing soda, caustic potash, drain cleaners, matches, kerosene, benzine, furniture polish, insect and rat poisons, shoe polish. If swallowed these can severely burn or poison. These should all be on high shelves out of reach. Using soft drink bottles with the old labels for any such fluids can be misleading and tempt a child to try a drink.

If your child has swallowed something that is poisonous, call the doctor, but act while waiting for him. Make the child vomit. Try sticking your finger down his throat until he retches, or make him drink a tumblerful of warm water with one ounce of salt dissolved therein. If you know an acid or alkali has been swallowed these must be neutralised before making the child vomit, or there will be more internal burning on the way up. For alkali (e.g., caustics) use one part of vinegar to four parts of water. For acid use one teaspoonful bicarbonate of soda to a glass of water, and in addition give a drink of milk to help dilute the acid. Having tried to neutralise the acid or alkali you now make the child vomit, and if the doctor cannot come, take the child post haste to the hospital for a stomach wash out.

There would be an advantage in having a universal antidote in your medicine cupboard. Your chemist can supply you with one from the New Zealand Formulary. It consists of activated medicinal charcoal, which absorbs dyes, alkaloids, and some metal salts, magnesium oxide which neutralises acid and tannic acid which reacts with alkaloids and many metals to make harmless insoluble salts. The adult dose is five to six teaspoonfuls, a small child two to three teaspoonfuls, stirred to a thin paste in a glass of water.

This is the text of a talk on health broadcast recently from ZB, ZA, YA and YZ stations of the NZBS by DR H. B. TURBOTT, Deputy-Director-General of Health

Should any of the burning acid or alkali or cleaning fluid get into a child's eyes, wash the eyes out with lots of water and keep running water through from a jug or teapot for some minutes. Then call the doctor. Don't try antidotes, just wash out. If the child is big enough to co-operate, another way is to dip the face in a basin of water and open and shut the eyes. This wash out treatment does for lime, too.

Should your child get an insect, grit or other particle in the eye, take a piece of clean blotting paper folded down to a point. As the eye is brushed the blotting paper is wetted and there is no scratching. Or use a wisp of cotton wool or a camel hair brush if you have one. If the particle or insect can't be found, it is probably under the upper lid. It is not difficult to turn the upper lid over to examine its surface. Pull the lid downwards with one hand, put a finger on the upper half of the eyelid, and tip the bottom half inside out over the tip of that finger.

If some foreign body is pushed into the ear or up the nose, you would be wiser to take the child to the doctor or hospital rather than to try to fish it out yourself. To get such things out is not easy. You might push it further in or do damage to delicate structures. If something is swallowed and all seems well wait and watch for it in the body waste. It may take a day to go through. If it doesn't appear consult doctor or hospital.

If baby falls on its head out of its pram or cot, or a little child tumbles down stairs or from a height on to its head and it seems to be a very hard bang indeed, lay the child down in bed. If it is drowsy and pale for some hours, will not eat, and vomits, call the doctor. If it stops crying within a quarter of an hour, is a good colour and doesn't vomit, it will probably be all right. It will want to sleep. Every hour wake it up to make sure it is just asleep and not unconscious. After the sleep if there should be a complaint of headache and vomiting, call the doctor.

THE PLUMED SERPENT

*FLOWERLIKE on a slender neck
blossomed that dreadful head
from which a serpent's tongue protruded.*

*The creature's body, breasted like a swan,
swept again in steeply curving strake
to a pointed sternpost. The dragon trumpeted.*

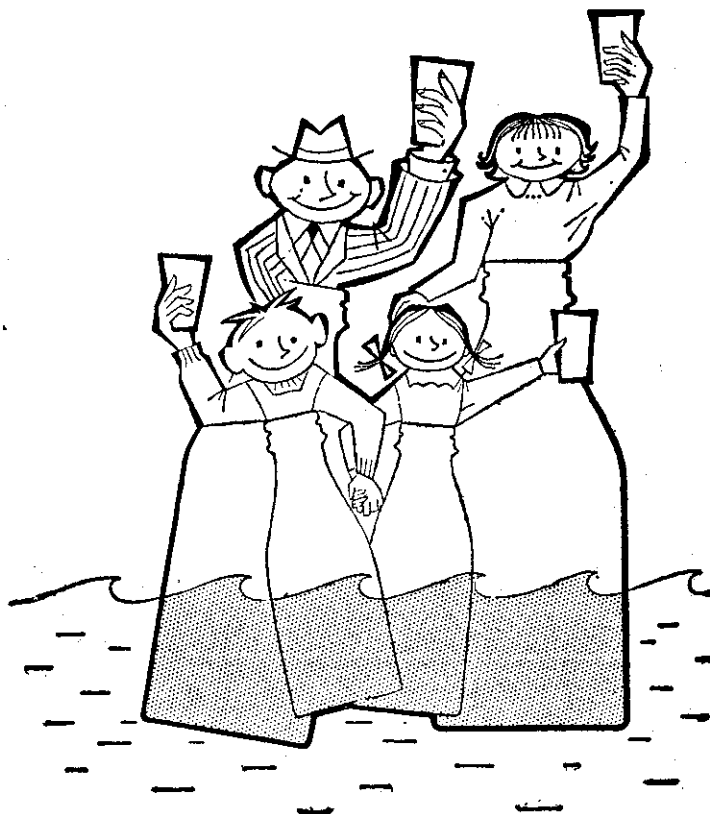
*Scales of bronze were lapped along her sides
and seemed to stain the water red with blood.
With oars moving like limbs, lightly she floated.*

*But strangest of all, that serpent's feathered wing
of shaggy cloth, striped white and crimson,
fastened with thongs, now suddenly furred and folded.*

—W. Hart-Smith

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