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## **PREVENTION OF IRON POISONING IN CHILDREN**

Iron poisoning is one of the leading causes of death in children under the ages of 6 years old in the U.S. The iron products responsible for the poisoning of young children come from both over-the-counter non-prescription daily multivitamins/minerals and high-potency prescriptions such as those supplements designed for pregnant women. Death has occurred from as few as five to as many as 98 tablets containing iron, from ingesting as little as 200 mg to as much as 5,850 mg of iron. The FDA has now created regulations designed to prevent this as of January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1997:

- (1) Warning labels regarding the risk of acute iron poisoning in children less than 6 years of age must be printed in all iron containing vitamins/supplements.
- (2) Most products containing 30mg or more of iron per dose such as iron pills for pregnant women will have to be packaged as individual doses (i.e. blister packs) so as to reduce the likelihood of swallowing a large number of pills.

### IMPORTANT POINTS FOR PARENTS:

- (1) Children who have been poisoned with iron face both immediate and long-term consequences: within minutes or hours after swallowing iron tablets, children may suffer nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and gastrointestinal bleeding which can lead to shock, coma and death.
- (2) Even if the child appears to recover from these initial symptoms, subsequent severe gastrointestinal bleeding, lethargy, liver damage, heart failure and coma can occur from 12 hours to 2 days later. Other equally serious problems can develop such as gastrointestinal obstruction and more extensive liver damage, 3-6 weeks after the poisoning.
- (3) Even if there are no immediate symptoms, parents should contact a local poison control center or a doctor immediately if their child has swallowed a product containing iron. Delayed treatment may not be effective for the consequences of iron poisoning.