

CBSAtlanta.com

Hand Sanitizers Pose Danger To Children

Hundreds Ingesting Germ-Killing Products

By *Stephany Fisher, CBS Atlanta Anchor*

POSTED: 5:19 pm EDT April 21, 2010

UPDATED: 5:35 pm EDT April 21, 2010

Related To Story



ATLANTA -- Elisabeth Lovett is teaching her 2-year-old daughter, Caroline, the ABCs of good hygiene.

"OK, now rub them together," said Lovett as she showed Caroline how to wash her hands.

But in March, Lovett learned a tough lesson: Don't leave hand sanitizer within a child's reach.

"She came over there and said, 'Mommy, this tastes funny,'" recalled Lovett.

Lovett followed the directions on the back of the bottle and immediately called Poison Control.

"They're a great resource and if every parent doesn't have them on speed dial, they should," she said.

Luckily, Caroline wasn't hurt, but she became one of a growing number of children that have ingested hand sanitizer.

"All it takes is just a minute for you to turn your back, and a kid's going to get into that stuff," said Gaylord Lopez, director of the Georgia Poison Center.

He said the call center receives, on average, two to three calls a day regarding alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

There were 823 cases in 2009, up from 696 in 2008. More than 90 percent of the incidents involved children under the age of 12.

"The more readily available a product is, the more likely someone's going to get into it," said Lopez.

The active ingredient in sanitizers is ethyl alcohol. The alcohol concentration in sanitizers varies by product -- from 60 percent to nearly 100 percent.

According to Lopez, a relatively small amount can cause alcohol poisoning in a child.

"In the right amount, in the right person, can maybe slow or stop your breathing, or it can cause a lot of metabolic or internal problems," said Lopez.

Hand sanitizers have been proven effective in helping prevent the spread of germs, and they should be used when soap and water aren't available.

But, Lovett has an important message for other moms and dads:

"Keep it ready, but keep it out of hands-reach because all it takes is a split second," she said.

Parents have the option to use sanitizers that have lower alcohol contents, or they can even use alcohol-free products, but any type of sanitizer should always be used under adult supervision.

If you think your child may have ingested hand sanitizer -- or any toxic substance -- call Poison Control at 1-800-222-1222.

For more information, [click here](#).

Copyright 2010 by [cbsatlanta.com](#). All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.