



SAFE USE OF HEALTH PRODUCTS CONTAINING CAMPHOR AND/OR EUCALYPTUS OILS.

The Issue

Some health products that contain camphor and/or eucalyptus oils can cause serious health problems, including seizures, if they are accidentally swallowed by children.

Background

Health products containing camphor and/or eucalyptus oils (also referred to as aromatic oils) are commonly found as non-prescription cough and cold remedies, used as chest rubs and by steam inhalation to relieve congestion. These oils are also found in some creams and ointments intended to relieve sore muscles.

The Possible Health Risks of Products Containing Camphor and/or Eucalyptus Oils

In the last decade, reports have surfaced in Canada and worldwide of side effects and reactions in children who accidentally swallow products containing camphor and/or eucalyptus oils, which are not intended for oral use. Parents and caregivers may not be aware that these products can be toxic to children. As with any other medication, it is important that these health products be used with caution and stored out of the reach of children.

The reported side effects from swallowing health products containing camphor and/or eucalyptus oils vary from minor symptoms, such as burning sensation in the mouth, headache, nausea, and vomiting, to more severe and life threatening reactions such as seizures. Parents and caregivers

who suspect that their child may have swallowed these substances should take the child immediately to the doctor or to the nearest health treatment centre.

Minimizing Your Risk

Parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of serious side effects or reactions from accidental swallowing of health products containing camphor and/or eucalyptus oils by taking the following steps:

- Check with your pharmacist and/or health care provider about the appropriate use of these over-the-counter health products and their use with infants and young children.
- Store these health products out of the reach of children to reduce the risk of accidental poisoning.
- Carefully read the product label warnings for these health products.
- Report any adverse reaction related to these or any other over-the-counter health products to your doctor or pharmacist or by calling the toll-free number (866) 234-2345 or faxing toll-free to (866) 678-6789.



Health Canada's Role

Health Canada has responded to this issue by putting in place some key measures to reduce the accidental poisoning of children. They include:

- Increasing public awareness about potential health risks associated with, and the safe and unsafe use of, health products containing camphor and eucalyptus oils;
- Reviewing the label warnings of health products containing camphor and eucalyptus oils that are currently available in Canada to determine if additional safety measures are required.

The Food and Drugs Act and Regulations require that health products be identified with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and be labelled with ingredients and directions for use.

In addition, since January 2004 the new Natural Health Products Regulations have been in effect. These regulations require natural health products marketed in Canada, including those containing camphor and eucalyptus oils, to list on their labels the product's medicinal and non-medicinal ingredients. As well, any potential risk information, such as warnings, cautions, contra-indications and known side effects associated with their use, must be included. This gives people ready access to the information they need to make safe and informed choices about the natural health products that they use. Natural health products that have been approved under these regu-

lations will either have a Natural Product Number (NPN) or a Natural Product Number-Homeopathic Medicine (DIN-HM).

Consumers can reduce the risk of side effects by taking products that have been approved and designated with a DIN, NPN, or DIN-HM on the label.

Need More Info?

- More information on the safe use of medicines can be found at:
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/iyh/medical/safe_medicine.html
- More information on natural health products, the new Natural Health Products Regulations, and how to interpret and use this information can be found on the Natural Health Products Directorate Web site.
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/nhpd-dpsn/index_e.html
- To report any adverse reaction or interaction involving a health product, including natural health products, contact Health Canada at the toll-free number (866) 234-2345 or fax at (866) 678-6789 or contact your Regional Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) Centre.
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/tpd-dpt/adr_regions_e.html

• Any suspected adverse reactions can also be reported to: Canadian Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring Program (CADRMP)
Marketed Health Products Directorate
Health Canada
Address locator 0701C
Ottawa, ON K1A 0L2
Tel: (613) 957-0337
Fax: (613) 957-0335

- Information on reporting adverse reactions is available at:
http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/tpd-dpt/index_adverse_report_e.html
- Additional It's Your Health articles:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/iyh/index.html>
You can also call (613) 957-2991.

ISBN#
Catalogue#