



**In this issue:**

- The dangers of “fake” drugs
- An app to put you in touch with your poison center
- Medications remain the leading cause of poison deaths

**The West Virginia  
Poison Center serving  
all of West Virginia**

[www.wvpoisoncenter.org](http://www.wvpoisoncenter.org)

**American Association  
of Poison Control  
Centers**

[www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org)

## Be Poison-Smart When Buying a Home

Buying a home can be a stressful experience in and of itself, with home inspections, offers and counter-offers and closings creating a bureaucratic minefield for buyers. But if you think that’s stressful, try buying a house only to realize that there are a myriad of health

hazards to fix.

Lead, radon, mold are among the toxins that can make a new home a headache and a hazard.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers wants home-buyers to shop smart when they look for a new place to dwell. Here are a few things to look for when you’re shopping for a new house – or items to invest in when you’re moving in.

### Carbon monoxide and smoke detectors

- Make sure homes have carbon monoxide and smoke detectors; you won’t be able to see this invisible gas. If your house doesn’t have them, buy them. Some municipalities have rules about how many to have and where to put them. Put carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms, and make sure their batteries are replaced regularly.



- Know which fuel-burning appliances and equipment can be a source of carbon monoxide poisoning if not vented and/or maintained properly.

- Know the history of the appliances and heating system in the home. Gather service records if possible. Knowing a little about

your appliances and heating system can help you know when it’s appropriate to replace furnaces, water heaters, gas dryers, wood-burning stoves and gas ranges, which all pose carbon monoxide risks.

### Lead

- Know the age of your home. Homes built before 1950 are highly likely to contain lead paint and homes built before 1978 may also contain this toxic paint.
- Look for paint chips or flaking lead-based paint. Window sills and doorways are common locations.
- If you want the home tested for lead paint, use a professional. Do Not rely on home test kits.

**Continued on Page 4**

# Fake Pot, Fake Cocaine: Very Real, Very Dangerous

One is marketed as “fake marijuana.” The other is advertised as “fake cocaine” or “fake meth.” Both were, initially, sold under the premise of being legal equivalents to illegal drugs.

But both are causing side effects that are generating a slew of calls to poison centers and spurring concern among doctors and clinicians at U.S. poison centers.

Poison centers first began taking calls about “synthetic marijuana” in late 2009. The substances sold for between \$30 and \$40 per three-gram bag, in packages labeled as incense or potpourri, and were marketed under brand names including “Spice,” “K2,” “Genie,” “Yucatan Fire,” “Sence,” “Smoke,” “Skunk” and “Zohai.”



Then, late last year, poison centers began to receive calls about products marketed as “bath salts” being sold both on the Internet as well as in gas stations and head shops. Packaging is usually a plastic bag filled with a white granular powder. The products are known by names including “Red Dove,” “Blue Silk,” “Zoom,” “Bloom,” “Cloud 9,” “Ocean Snow,” “Lunar Wave,” “Vanilla Sky,” “Ivory Wave,” “White Lightning,” “Scarface” and “Hurricane Charlie.” They produce increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, agitation, hallucinations, extreme paranoia and delusions.

A few tips on these products and the dangers surrounding them:

- Parents of teens should be on the lookout for such

## Carbon Monoxide: Odorless, Colorless, Tasteless and Deadly

Carbon monoxide – odorless, colorless and tasteless - is a deadly hazard all year round.

All fuel-burning equipment and appliances create the risk for carbon monoxide, including water heaters, wood and gas fireplaces, generators and automobile engines.

products in their children’s bedrooms and backpacks. Be particularly skeptical of products labeled “incense” or “bath salts.”

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of drug use in loved ones: paranoia, changes in personality, agitation and anxiety are among the symptoms reported by users of these substances.
- Talk with family members about the dangers of these products. Don’t be fooled by the ready availability and legal status of new “designer drugs.” These products are not a “safe” or harmless alternative to other illicit drugs of abuse. Many can cause hallucinations and agitation that poison center officials say represents the opposite of a “mellow high.” In the case of bath salts, for example, poison center officials report instances of severe paranoia that could cause the user to harm himself or others.
- Keep the West Virginia Poison Center number near your phone: 1-800-222-1222. Remember: You can call the West Virginia Poison Center to ask about these substances even if you have not been exposed to them.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation’s 57 poison control centers in their efforts to prevent poisoning. The West Virginia Poison Center offers free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you believe you’ve been exposed to a poison or have questions about whether a substance is poisonous, call the West Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

At its mildest, carbon monoxide poisoning can feel a little like the flu – causing headaches, dizziness, exhaustion, confusion, fainting and vomiting.

But at its worst, exposure to carbon monoxide can be fatal. In 2008, exposure to carbon monoxide resulted in 47 U.S. deaths, according to data from the American Association of Poison Control Centers. U.S. poison centers took 14,461 calls about carbon monoxide exposure in 2008.

**Continued on Page 3.**

# Protect yourself from Carbon Monoxide, from page 2

The American Association of Poison Control Centers offers these tips for combating carbon monoxide:

- Never use a charcoal or gas grill inside a house, garage, closed-in porch or tent.
- Do not use charcoal in the fireplace.
- Have your furnace inspected and adjusted before every heating season.
- When using the fireplace to burn wood or gas logs, make sure the flue is open and the chimney is not blocked. Have your chimney, fireplace, and wood stoves, and flues inspected before every heating season.
- Do not use a kerosene heater or gas logs for heat unless you have a working carbon monoxide alarm.
- Never use a generator inside your home – not even in the basement, garage or porch. Keep it outside, far from the house.

- Never use a gas stove or oven to heat the house.
- Never leave a car running inside a garage, even if the garage door is open.
- Never sleep in a parked car while the engine is running.
- Get a carbon monoxide detector, with a battery back-up system, for your home. If you have a big house, get more than one detector.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation's 57 poison control centers in their efforts to alert the public about the poison prevention. Poison centers offer free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

For questions about poisons, call the West Virginia Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

## Medications Remain Leading Cause of Poisoning Deaths in 2009

Medications remained the leading cause of poisoning deaths in 2009, with most poisoning fatalities occurring among adults, according to a new report by the American Association of Poison Control Centers.

In all, U.S. poison centers took more than 4.2 million calls in 2009, treating more than 2.4 million poison exposures and answering more than 1.6 million questions about poisons.

The report, based on data from 2009 calls to U.S. poison centers, found that sedatives/hypnotics/antipsychotics; cardiovascular drugs, opioids and acetaminophen combinations were most frequently associated with poison-related deaths. In all, poison centers reported 1,158 poison-related fatalities in 2009.

Children younger than six were involved in the majority of all poison exposures reported to poison centers in 2009, but accounted for just 1.8 percent of poison-related fatalities that year. Most fatalities occurred in people between the ages of 20 and 59.

More than 91 percent of all poison exposures occurred in a residence. Most patients were treated at home: More than 72 percent of calls from the general public were man-

aged at home, meaning patients avoided costly emergency care.



Among other findings in the report:

- The top five substance classes most frequently involved in all human exposures were analgesics (11.7 percent); cosmetics/personal care products (7.7 percent); household cleaning substances (7.4 percent); sedatives/hypnotics/antipsychotics (5.8 percent); foreign bodies/toys/miscellaneous (4.3 percent).
- While 91.19 percent of all poison exposures occurred in the home, poison exposures also occurred in the workplace (1.51 percent); in school (1.26 percent) and in restaurants or food service establishments (.24 percent).

The report is based on information from the National Poison Data System (NPDS), which tracks every call made to U.S. poison centers in near real-time, serving as a national resource to collect and monitor U.S. poison exposure and serving as one of the few real-time national surveillance systems in place to track health trends. The full report is available online at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org).

# Making Real Estate Transactions Poison-Free, from Page 1

## Mold

- Look for signs of water problems like leaking pipes or faucets, wet areas, musty smells, water stains or high humidity.

- If you see a leak, remember that mold is a possibility.

Work hard to maintain a dry home, and quickly repair leaks and other sources of moisture in the home. That may also mean drying all surfaces, using a dehumidifier, increasing ventilation and washing moldy items with a bleach and water solution.

## Pests

- Look for entry points like gaps surrounding pipes and holes in walls.

- Identify sources of food, water and shelter. Pests cannot survive without all three. Make your abode inhospitable to them.

- If you see evidence of pests, know the enemy – identify the specific type of pest that is in your home. Use integrated pest-management techniques to rid the house of pests (use non-chemical methods first). If you need to use pesticides, read the label first and take precautions or hire a professional.

## Radon

- Test your home for radon. What you can't see can have long-term health consequences, and radon is odorless and colorless.

- Check with your health department for a list of qualified professionals who can test and/or fix radon problems in your home.

## Coming Soon: An App to Put You in Touch with Your Poison Center

You scan coupon barcodes, check-in at your favorite restaurant, and update your Facebook status from your iPhone. Why not call your poison center with it, too?

The American Association of Poison Control Centers will soon release free smartphone apps that will allow users to connect with their poison center with the touch of a button. The first app available will be the iPhone, with BlackBerry, Droid and Windows 7 apps to follow.

The app will allow users to click on the Poison Help logo to contact poison centers. It will also offer poison prevention tips and connect users with the American Association of Poison Control Center's website.

It will help users get in touch with the expert nurses, pharmacists, or doctors at your poison center who can help you with your poisoning emergency or question.

- Did your toddler invade the vitamin bottle?
- Did you get bitten by an outdoor critter?
- Did your aging parent take an extra dose or the wrong dose of their medicine?

Use the poison control center app to contact poison center experts immediately, because in a poisoning emergency, there's no time to waste. The iPhone app will be available in late March at [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org) or through your app marketplace, with other apps following in the coming months.



This newsletter is brought to you by The West Virginia Poison Center and was produced with assistance from the American Association of Poison Control Centers and local poison centers around the country.

When you dial 1-800-222-1222, your call is answered by a medical professional with special training in poisoning management. Help is fast, free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, every day.