

# Study finds personal care products send a child to the emergency room every two hours

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In homes across the country, there are dangerous products hidden in plain sight on bathroom counters and bedroom dressers. Personal care products like shampoo, lotion, makeup, nail polish and cologne seem like they should be safe since they are intended for use on our bodies. However, in the hands of young children, these products can quickly

lead to trouble. A new study conducted by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that 64,686 children younger than five years of age were treated in U.S. emergency departments for injuries related to personal care products from 2002 through 2016—that is the equivalent of about one child every two hours.

The study, published today in *Clinical Pediatrics*, found that most injuries from these products occurred when a child swallowed the product (75.7%) or the product made contact with a child's skin or eyes (19.3%). These ingestions and exposures most often led to poisonings (86.2%) or chemical burns (13.8%).

"When you think about what [young children](#) see when they look at these products, you start to understand how these injuries can happen," said Rebecca McAdams, MA, MPH, co-author of this study and senior research associate in the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's. "Kids this age can't read, so they don't know what they are looking at. They see a bottle with a colorful label that looks or smells like something they are allowed to eat or drink, so they try to open it and take a swallow. When the bottle turns out to be nail polish remover instead of juice, or lotion instead of yogurt, serious injuries can occur."

The top three [product categories](#) leading to injuries were nail care products (28.3%) hair care products (27.0%), and skin care products (25.0%), followed by fragrance products (12.7%). Nail polish remover was the individual product that led to the most number of visits to the emergency room (17.3% of all injuries). Of the more serious injuries that required hospitalization, more than half were from hair care products (52.4%) with hair relaxers and permanent solutions leading to more hospitalizations than all other products.

Also of concern, is the ease of access to these products. "Children watch their parents use these items and may try to imitate their behavior. Since these products are often stored in easy-to-reach places and are not typically in child-resistant containers, it is can be easy for kids to get to and open the bottles," said McAdams. "Because these products are currently not required to have child-resistant packaging, it is important for parents to put them away immediately after use and store them safely—up, away, and out of sight—preferably in a cabinet or closet with a lock or a latch. These simple steps can prevent many injuries and trips to the emergency department." Researchers also recommend that pediatricians discuss these safe storage guidelines with caregivers during well-child visits.

Parents and child caregivers can help [children](#) stay safer by following these tips:

- Up, away and out of sight. Store all [personal care products](#) safely: up, away and out of sight—in a cabinet that can be locked or latched is best. Never leave personal care products out unattended and put them away immediately after use.
- Store safely now. It is never too soon to start practicing safe storage. Almost 60% of the injuries in this study were to children younger than 2 years of age.
- Original containers. Keep all personal care products in their original containers.
- Know how to get help. Save the national Poison Help Line (1-800-222-1222) in your cell phone and post it near your home phones.

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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