

ASK AHSC

ANSWERS TO HEALTH QUESTIONS

From The University of Arizona Health Sciences Center (AHSC) in Tucson

Q How can I “poison-proof” my home?

A Begin by checking the surroundings for all potentially dangerous items. Accidental poisonings in the home occur most commonly in the kitchen, bathroom and garage.

In the kitchen, lock all cabinets that hold dangerous products. Store household cleaning products, including drain cleaners and laundry soaps, away from food and medications. Always store cleaning products in their original containers, never in old drinking glasses, soda bottles or similar containers—a child may think the contents are edible or drinkable and swallow it.

In the bathroom, store medicines in their original containers in a locked cabinet. Make sure that all medications, vitamins and supplements have child-resistant closures. Always return medicines to safe storage immediately after using. Remove cosmetics or place them out of reach.

In the garage, keep pesticides (insect killers), herbicides (weed killers) and fertilizer products locked up, out of sight and out of reach of children. When using pesticides, keep children and their toys away from the area. Store products such as antifreeze, paints and solvents in their original containers in a locked cabinet.

The Arizona Poison and Drug

Information Center offers tips on safely managing hazardous household products, plants, poisonings, medications, and bites and stings on its World Wide Web homepage at: http://www.pharm.arizona.edu/centers/poison_center/index.html.

Poison Center specialists also are available 24 hours a day, every day of the year to answer questions about medication interactions, poisonous products, household chemicals, snake bites, scorpion stings and more. To reach a poison specialist in Tucson, call the Poison Center at 626-6016; for all other areas of the state, call 1-800-362-0101.

—Jude McNally, R.Ph.,
assistant director, Arizona
Poison and Drug Information
Center, the University of
Arizona College of Pharmacy,
Tucson

Q What is glaucoma, how common is it, and what research is being done about it?

A About 3 million Americans have glaucoma, making it the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S. It is the single leading cause of blindness for African Americans.

The most common form — primary open-angle glaucoma — develops slowly, with few if any symptoms, usually after age 35.

Glaucoma results from increased fluid pressure in the eye, due to reduced or blocked drainage. In most cases, the increased pressure is thought to compress the optic nerve, resulting in loss of vision.

Researchers with the Basic Glaucoma Research Laboratory of the UA College of Medicine Department of Ophthalmology are studying the causes of glaucoma, as well as treatments and potential cures.

Glaucoma usually runs in families, so there is a genetic component. My research focuses on identifying the molecular and cellular mechanisms that regulate normal and abnormal fluid pressure within the eye. By understanding how fluid exits the eye and how it is regulated, I hope to identify targets that can be used by pharmaceutical companies to develop drugs that compensate for the genetic defects.

Our researchers also are studying several treatment options to improve fluid outflow, including pharmaceuticals, laser technology, implantable drainage devices and gene therapy. Proyecto VER, a study of eye diseases in Hispanics in Tucson and Nogales, Ariz., is gathering data that will assist in treatment and early detection in this population.

Early detection and treatment of glaucoma is simple and painless, and decreases your risk of vision loss. Especially if you have relatives who have glaucoma, checking your fluid pressure early provides a baseline to measure increases.

—Daniel Stamer, Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Ophthalmology, the University of Arizona College of Medicine, Tucson