7 things you can do to make your home safer

More than 90 percent of the 2 million poisonings reported each year occur in the home. Here’s how to make your home safer:

1. Store all potentially poisonous household products and medications LOCKED out of children's SIGHT and REACH.
   Unsafe: toilet cleaners, bleach, oven cleaners, dishwasher products.
   Potential hazards: alcohol, medicines, makeup, plants, toys, pesticides, art supplies.

2. Never call medicine candy.

3. Keep products in their original packaging to avoid confusion.

4. Do not use food containers such as cups, bottles or jars to store chemical products such as cleaning solutions or beauty products.

5. Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.

6. Never use a stove for heating a room.

7. Never leave a car, SUV or motorcycle engine running inside a garage – even if the garage door is open.

If your child has collapsed or is not breathing, call 911. Take the bottle of the ingested product to the phone. Most non-fatal poisonings occur in children younger than six years old.

1.800.222.1222 is the toll-free nationwide poison control center number. Keep it written near every phone. It works from anywhere in the United States, 24/7 and offers fast, free, confidential help in English and Spanish.

Prayer: Gracious God, provide me with what I need to know and do so I can care for my family fully. Watch over them, and keep our home safe from dangers of all kinds. Amen.

Resources: advocatehealth.com • mtstcil.org/skills/home-6.html (lists of poisonous household items) • Poisonprevention.org • aapcc.org (Amer. Assn. of Poison Control Centers) • cdc.gov/healthyhomes/bytopic/poisoning.html • www.poison.org

Practical Guide to the Affordable Care Act
Top things for people without insurance to know

1. Lifetime limits on most benefits are prohibited. Annual dollar limits have been set at increasingly higher amounts until January 1, 2014, when most plans are banned from having an annual dollar limit on coverage.

2. Annual dollar limits may not be less than $2 million for plans in 2013. No annual dollar limits are allowed on most covered benefits beginning 1/1/14. (The limit began 9/23/12.)

3. Children with pre-existing conditions cannot be rejected.

4. Children can stay on their parents' policies up to age 26. A young adult can qualify for this coverage even if he or she is no longer living with a parent, is not a dependent on a parent's tax return or is no longer a student.

5. Low-income individuals/families may receive some subsidy from the government for their health insurance.

Two other things to note:
✦ A temporary, high-risk pool is a new option for those who were previously rejected and uninsurable.
✦ Starting January 1, 2014, those without insurance will be required to pay a penalty. The penalty is graduated and determined by one's length without coverage.

The Illinois Consumer Assistance Program helps with problems and questions about health coverage. Its walk-in location is 100 Randolph St, 9th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601. Call 877.527.943, or visit insurance.illinois.gov to learn more.

To find out more about pre-existing conditions for Illinois children, visit PCIP.gov (Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan) or insurance.illinois.gov/IPXP, or call 877.210.9167.

Kaiser Family Foundation (kff.org) and Healthcare.gov are the sources for the above information. Please refer to those sites for further explanation and clarification.

April focus: ACA and healthy individuals