



Central Office: 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT 06109 Phone (860) 721-2822 Fax (860) 721-2823

Berlin: 240 Kensington Road, Berlin, CT 06037 Phone (860) 828-7017 Fax (860) 828-9248

Newington: 131 Cedar Street, Newington, CT 06111 Phone (860) 665-8586 Fax (860) 665-8533

Rocky Hill: 761 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 Phone (860) 258-2770 Fax (860) 258-2767

www.ccthd.org

January 5, 2012

Health District Urges Residents to Take Caution While Using Moth Balls

Did you know that 4,000 children per year are exposed to moth balls, with 600 of these cases requiring medical attention? The Central Connecticut Health District is warning residents that the use of mothballs is a health risk to adults and babies. Mothballs are not always safe, especially if they are used improperly within the home.

Mothballs have been used for many years to store clothing in closets. However, there is a growing risk of using mothballs, especially for babies. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), moth balls contain one of two toxic chemicals, known as naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene. Both of these toxic substances become a gas when exposed to air and create the musty, pungent smell that we are familiar with. These gases can be irritating to eyes, lungs and can cause headache, dizziness and nausea. The chemicals are suspected of causing cancer. Naphthalene is the more toxic ingredient as it causes red blood cells to break apart, which is commonly known as hemolytic anemia. Babies are the most susceptible to high exposure because they are less likely to clear any toxic byproducts in their blood. Babies who have a hereditary defect called glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency are at the highest risk.

To keep your children safe, here are a few guidelines to follow:

- Never sprinkle moth balls in closets, attics, gardens or storage areas.
- Use other methods to repel moths such as cedar chips.
- If you do continue moth ball use, choose a brand that contains paradichlorobenzene instead of naphthalene, because it is less harmful. Also, store clothing containing moth balls in tightly sealed storage bags or cabinets and lock in a child-proof cabinet.
- If clothing was stored with moth balls, wash and air out before allowing the items to be worn by children.
- Never use moth balls as room deodorizers or as animal repellents, because this increases the chance that children will find them.
- Do not use moth flakes, because they contain the same chemicals described above.

A key symptom of moth ball consumption is jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), which can progress to organ damage and death. If you suspect that your child has ingested a moth ball, immediately seek medical care and call the Connecticut Poison Control Center at 800-222-1222 or Connecticut DPH Toxicology at 860-509-7740. For more information about moth balls, contact the Central Connecticut Health District, celebrating 15 years of service, at 860-721-2822 or by visiting our website at www.ccthd.org.