



Poison Safety



Key Facts

- Each year, more than 100 children ages 14 years and under die as a result of unintentional poisoning.



- Each year, there are more than 91,000 nonfatal poisonings to children that are treated in hospital emergency rooms.
- More than 1.2 million unintentional poisonings among children ages 5 years and under were reported to U.S. poison control centers in 2004.
- In 2005, there were nearly 63,000 drug poisonings to children under age 5.
- Non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants, foreign bodies and toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol are responsible for 56 percent of poisoning exposures for children under 5 years of age.
- Each year, an estimated seven children ages 14 years and under are fatally poisoned by exposure to carbon monoxide (CO).

Where, When and How

- For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately 9 occur in the home.
- Calls to poison control centers peak between 4 -11 p.m., especially during warmer months.
- Children are poisoned by household and personal care products, medicines, vitamins, pesticides, plants, lead, and carbon monoxide.
- Among children under 5 years of age, more than half of poisoning exposures are by products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants, toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol; 44 percent of poison exposures are attributed to medicines.

Who

- Black children under 14 years of age have a poisoning death rate twice that of white children.
- Children ages 5 years and under are at greatest risk for nonfatal poisoning.
- In 2005, half of all poisoning cases occurred to children age 6 years and under.
- Males are at a slightly higher risk for poisoning injury or death than females.

Proven Interventions

- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medicine effectively reduces the poisoning mortality rate among children ages 4 years and under.
- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medications has saved an estimated 460 deaths among children under age 4 years from 1974 through 1992.
- Poison Control Centers yield an estimated cost savings of \$290 for a cost of only \$43 per call in the United States.
- Of cases reported to Poison Control Centers, 77 percent are managed in a non-health care facility (e.g., site of exposure, the home).
- CO detectors are effective in preventing residential CO poisoning. It is estimated that CO detectors may prevent half of such deaths.

Costs

- Poison Control Centers are effective and economical because more than 70 percent of cases are resolved over the telephone while the patient remains at home. This avoids unnecessary emergency room visits, ambulance use, hospital admissions, and treatment delays.
- If Poison Control Centers were not available nationwide, 600,000 additional poisoning victims would receive medical treatment annually at a much higher cost.

Laws and Regulations

- The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act of 2000 established funding for a national toll-free 24-hour hotline: 1-800-222-1222. The toll-free 24-hour hotline connects the public to their local poison control, staffed by professionals in poisoning management.
- Only 9 states and some local jurisdictions have passed legislation requiring the use of CO detectors in homes.