Poisoning Safety Fact Sheet (2014)

Fatalities
- 838 children ages 19 and under died from poisonings in 2011.\(^1\) 746 of these deaths, or 89%, were drug-related.\(^1\)
  - 88% of children (739) who died from a poisoning were ages 15 to 19.\(^1\)
  - 73% of children (611) who died from a poisoning were boys.\(^1\)
- The number of children dying from poisoning has more than doubled since 1999.\(^1\)

1999-2011 Poisoning* Fatalities and Death Rate Among Children Ages 19 and Under

![Graph showing the number of fatalities and death rate from 1999 to 2011.]

Injuries
- 125,519 children ages 19 and under were seen in emergency rooms for nonfatal poisonings in 2012.\(^1\)

Additional Statistics
Medication:
- In 2011, 67,700 children ages 4 and under were seen in emergency departments for accidental medication exposures, and 12,390 of these children required hospitalization.\(^2\)
• Children ages 13 to 24 months are most frequently seen in emergency departments after getting into a medication, accounting for 68% of medication-related visits for young children.\(^2\)

• In emergency department cases where information is known, 38% involved a grandparent’s medicine, 31% the mother’s medicine, 12% a sibling’s medicine, 8% the father’s medicine, 5% a aunt/uncle’s medicine, and 6% known/other.\(^2\)

• In emergency department cases where information is known, the pill was found on the ground or misplaced (27%), in a purse or bag (20%), on a counter or nightstand (20%), in a pillbox or bag of pills (15%). In only 6% of cases, the medicine was in a cabinet or drawer.\(^2\)

• Timing of dose leads to the greatest number of dosing errors in children ages 5 and under (31% of dosing errors), followed by measurement errors (30%).\(^2\)

• For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately nine occur in the home.\(^3\,\,4\)

**Other poisons:**

• The leading causes of non-medication exposure calls to poison control centers for children ages 5 and under were cosmetics and personal care products, household cleaning substances, foreign bodies/toys, pesticides and plants.\(^5\)

• Some of the most serious household poisons other than medicine include drain openers and toilet bowl cleaners which can cause chemical burns as serious as burns from fire; nail glue removers that can cause cyanide poisoning if swallowed; and windshield washer solution that can cause blindness and death if swallowed.\(^6\)

**Poison control centers:**

• Half of the 2 million calls to poison control centers in 2011 were for exposures and ingestions among children ages 5 and under.\(^5\)

• Each dollar spent on a poison control center saves approximately $7 to $15 in unnecessary health care expenses.\(^7\,\,8\)

• The national toll-free 24-hour hotline is: **1-800-222-1222.** This hotline connects the public to their local poison control center, staffed by medical professionals in poisoning management.

**Carbon monoxide:**

• In 2009, poison control centers reported 3,551 cases of CO exposure among children ages 19 and under.\(^9\)

• Because of their high metabolic rates and high tissue oxygen demands, children are biologically at increased risk of CO poisoning when exposed to CO.\(^10\)

**References**


Last updated June 2014. If you have a question about this factsheet, please call 202-662-0600.