

Poison Exposures in the United States

Facts On Poison Exposures:

- On average, poison centers handle one poison exposure every 14 seconds.
- Over two million poison exposures were reported to local poison centers in 2000.
- Most poisonings involve everyday household items such as cleaning supplies, medicines, cosmetics and personal care items.
- 89 percent of all poison exposures occur in the home.
- 92 percent of exposures involve only one poisonous substance.
- 86.7 percent of poison exposures are unintentional.
- 75 percent of poison exposures involve ingestion of a poisonous substance. Other causes include breathing in poison gas, getting foreign substances in the eyes or on the skin, and bites and stings.
- 77 percent of all exposures are treated on the site where they occurred, generally the patient's home with phone advice and assistance from local poison control experts.

Children and Poison:

- 53 percent of poison exposures occur in children under the age of six.
- The most common forms of poison exposure for children under the age of six are cosmetics and personal care products (13.3%), cleaning substances (10.7%), analgesics (7.6%) and plants (6.9%).
- Although children under the age of six are the most likely to be exposed to poison, they represent just over two percent of poison fatalities.

Poison Exposures in the United States (continued)

Teens and Poison:

- 160,000 cases of poison exposure were reported among teenagers in 2000.
- In children between ages 13 and 19, the majority of poison exposures (55%) involve girls. In children under 13, the reverse is true; over 56 percent of these exposures involve boys.
- 84 percent of reported adolescent deaths from poison exposure were due to intentional poison exposure such as suicide or drug abuse.

Adults and Poison:

- Over 8,000 poison exposures in 2000 occurred in pregnant women.
- Over 60 percent of all poison fatalities occur in adults ages 20 to 49.
- While adults 60 and over account for four percent of poison exposures, they account for 15.5 percent of the fatalities.

** Data from the 2000 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System, which is compiled by the American Association of Poison Control Centers in cooperation with the majority of U.S. poison centers. Since 1983, the data from the TESS have been used to identify hazards early, focus prevention education, guide clinical research and direct training. A full report is available on the web at www.aapcc.org. The report is also published in the Journal of Emergency Medicine. (Litovitz TL, Klein-Schwartz W, White S. et al: 2000 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System. American Journal of Emergency Medicine 2001; 19: 337 – 395)*

