Poisoning Safety Fact Sheet (2013)

Fatalities
- 838 children ages 19 and under died from poisonings in 2010.1
  - 89% of children who died from a poisoning were ages 15 to 19.1 Poisoning is the second leading cause of injury-related death among children ages 15 to 19 after motor vehicle.1
  - 73% of children who died from a poisoning were boys.1
- The number of children dying from poisoning has more than doubled since 1999.1

1999-2010 Poisoning* Fatalities and Death Rate Among Children Ages 19 and Under

Injuries
- 130,301 children ages 19 and under were seen in emergency rooms for nonfatal poisonings in 2011.1

Additional Statistics
Medication:
- In 2011, 67,700 children 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 March 2013. If you have a question about this factsheet, please call 202-662-0600.