



March 17, 2022

Contact: Amy Barry
(217) 541-1158
abarry@team-iha.org

Illinois Joins Poison Centers Across the Nation to Remind the Public About Potential Toxins and Ways to Improve Safety

*Illinois Poison Center to Participate in National Poison Prevention Week
March 20-26; Celebrate 60-Year Anniversary*

CHICAGO – For more than 60 years, poison centers have provided vital information and resources to families to help reduce the threat of poisoning and save lives.

Next week, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC), the nation’s oldest poison center, will participate in National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW) from March 20-26 to raise awareness about poison dangers and educate the public on ways to further protect their loved ones. IPC will also join other poison centers around the country to recognize the [60th anniversary of NPPW](#).

“Poison dangers are all around us and can impact everyone,” says IPC Medical Director Michael Wahl, M.D. “We have healthcare experts standing by 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to answer questions about potential risks, provide treatment advice, and help reduce the risk of harm. No issue is too big or too small for us and calls are free and confidential.”

In 2021, IPC handled 75,000 cases involving potentially harmful substances ranging from minor to severe. In fact, approximately one-third of IPC’s poison calls come directly from doctors on behalf of their patients, seeking additional guidance about treatment plans related to harmful exposures such as overdoses, medication errors or reactions, plants, household chemicals, automotive products, insect stings, lead, carbon monoxide and more.

“Medication, plants, alcohol, and cleaning supplies are all among the daily items we frequently use that can be potentially toxic and harmful substances if not used properly,” says IPC Assistant Vice President Carol DesLauriers, PharmD.

Children are especially vulnerable to choking or accidental ingestions, but adults are also at risk. Poisoning—including drug overdoses and carbon monoxide—was the leading cause of

injury-related death for adults 25-64 years old in Illinois, outranking motor vehicle crashes and firearms combined, according to the state of Illinois' *2018-2022 State Strategic Plan to Prevent Injury, Violence, and Suicide*. Hospitalizations and emergency department visit rates due to poisoning are also highest among adults ages 25-64 compared to other age groups.

"IPC is here to help educate the public on how to prevent poisoning harm and serve as a community service for anyone if the unexpected happens," said DesLauriers, noting that Illinoisans of all ages are encouraged to review IPC's educational resources.

Resources can be found at <https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/resources>, and include:

- A complimentary safety packet featuring a sticker, magnet and first aid tips for poisonings;
- A video library; and
- Blog posts tackling urgent, trending and seasonal topics.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers recognizes National Poison Prevention Week from March 20-26. March is also Illinois Poison Prevention Month.

IPC encourages the public to participate in Illinois Poison Prevention Week by:

- Sharing IPC's website (<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org>) with friends and family;
- Completing IPC's free online poison prevention education course (available in both English and Spanish); (<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/education/poison-prevention-education>);
- Posting on social media using #NPPW22; and
- Raising awareness about IPC's toll-free, confidential expert helpline service (800-222-1222).

IPC's toxicology specialists, who serve most all languages, resolve over 90% of poison exposure cases over the phone, eliminating the need for referral to a healthcare facility. IPC staff serve as toxicology consultants to Illinois healthcare professionals, whose inquiries represent nearly one-third of yearly poisoning cases. Calls to the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) are free and confidential. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

###

The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.