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Team Up with the IPC to Prevent Poisonings in March

Nation's oldest poison center works to save lives and educate Illinoisans all month

This week, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) kicks off Illinois Poison Prevention Month, which serves as a timely reminder of the substantial harm poisoning can cause to the young and old alike. In 2016, the IPC managed nearly 79,000 cases regarding potentially harmful substances, with almost half of those involving children five years of age and under.

Almost any substance, from medications and vitamins to plants and beauty products, can be potentially toxic if used or ingested incorrectly. Last year, the substances most frequently involved in IPC cases included:

- Analgesics (painkillers): 11,427 cases;
- Sedative hypnotics/antipsychotics: 7,406 cases;
- Cleaning substances: 5,735 cases;
- Cosmetics/personal care products: 5,713 cases;
- Antidepressants: 4,897 cases;
- Antihistamines: 3,959 cases;
- Alcohols: 3,947 cases;
- Cardiovascular drugs: 3,530 cases;
- Foreign bodies/toys: 2,810 cases; and
- Topical preparations: 2,430 cases.

By providing treatment advice over the phone, IPC experts managed 90 percent of poison exposure calls from the public at the site of exposure, eliminating the need for a referral to a healthcare facility. This prevented an estimated 30,000 emergency department visits in 2016.

Education is a critical component in reducing the damaging effects of poisoning in Illinois. As proclaimed by [Governor Bruce Rauner](#) and [Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel](#), Illinois Poison Prevention Month is an initiative to spread information about poison prevention to families and communities throughout March. Hundreds of free, public education events are scheduled across the state.

“While children, young adults and the elderly are some of the most at-risk populations for poisoning, it is crucial that we raise awareness among all Illinoisans,” says Michael Wahl, M.D., medical director, IPC. “In Illinois, more people are hospitalized for poisoning than for injuries from firearms and motor vehicle collisions combined. It can happen to anyone, and that’s why poison prevention education is vital to the public’s safety.”

IPC staff and volunteers will distribute educational information and promotional items at no cost to tens of thousands of Illinoisans to give them the tools and strategies to create safer home and work environments, as well as raise awareness about the free, confidential expert helpline service for children and adults. In addition, the IPC will provide complimentary poison prevention education and promotion materials to those who complete the IPC’s free online [Poison Prevention Education Course](#) and order before March 12.

The IPC encourages residents to take advantage of videos, activity sheets and other educational materials available on the [IPC website](#) and the [IPC blog](#). These include “[My Child Ate...](#),” an online library of potentially harmful substances often ingested by children. The page is meant to serve as an informational resource as parents and caregivers increasingly turn to the internet to search “my child ate...”

For more information on Illinois Poison Prevention Month, [click here](#).

IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 800-222-1222. The call is free and confidential. For more information, visit the IPC’s website: <http://illinoispoisoncenter.org>.

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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.