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IPC: “Shatter the Myths” During National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week
IPC Triage Cases of Youth Drug Abuse

Last year, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) managed thousands of cases of drugs that can be abused, with 698 cases of abuse and misuse involving children between the ages six and 17. Of those 698 cases:

- 332 cases, or 48 percent, involved benzodiazepines, which include medications like Xanax, Valium and Ativan;
- 174 cases, or 25 percent, involved stimulants like amphetamines and cocaine;
- 150 cases, or 21 percent, involved heroin and opioids, including prescription opioids;
- 25 cases, or 4 percent, involved hallucinogens like LSD; and
- 17 cases, or 2 percent, involved synthetic cannabinoids.

While a [recent report](#) from National Institutes of Health shows a decline in teenage drug use, the problem continues to be a public health issue, as well as a grave concern for parents. The IPC too has seen fluctuations in the substances involved in cases of drug abuse in children between the ages six and 17. The IPC reports that between 2011 and 2016, the number of cases involving benzodiazepines increased by 52 percent. In the same period, the IPC recorded an 84 percent decrease in cases of synthetic cannabinoids abuse, as well as a 19 percent decrease in cases involving hallucinogens. Cases involving heroin and opioids, and stimulants decreased by 6 and 5 percent, respectively, between 2011 and 2016.

In many cases, children have easy access to some of these drugs in the medicine cabinet at home or through friends at school, highlighting the continued need for a national conversation about drug abuse. During National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week (Jan. 23-29), teens are encouraged to “Shatter the Myths” about drugs by learning how drugs affect their brains and bodies. Free, educational resources for teens, parents, educators and more can be found on the National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week [website](#).

“National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week underscores the importance of educating the public, especially children, teenagers and parents, on the potential harms of improperly taking any drugs, whether they’re prescription medications or illegal substances,” says Michael Wahl, M.D., medical director, IPC. “This kind of education is a critical component of the IPC’s mission to reduce the incidence and injury of poisoning in our communities.”

The IPC offers a variety of resources to make Illinois safer. Anyone age 13 or older, who lives or works in Illinois, can take advantage of the IPC's free [online poison prevention course](#), which includes valuable information about the risks of and appropriate responses to poisonings. In addition, the IPC marks [Illinois Poison Prevention Month](#) every March by providing information and promotional materials at no cost to make Illinoisans aware of how to protect themselves and their families from poisonings. Finally, the IPC website includes educational information for the public on a wide range of topics, including [medication safety](#).

In addition to its work in education, when situations involving overdoses or side effects of drug use do arise, the IPC can serve as a life-saving resource. With a phone call, Illinoisans of any age can immediately access comprehensive information and treatment advice. IPC experts are available 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.