



poison prevention press

Economics of the MPC

Calling the MPC is free. Our services are supported through federal and state dollars, grants, contracts and private donations. We have experienced budget cuts, but strive to provide the same high quality service we have always provided. You can help by calling the MPC...a decrease in the number of calls could be interpreted by some as a decrease in need for the service. If you are able, make a donation. Contact your government representatives to express support for funding of poison center services. Tell your friends and family about our services and have the phone number at the ready... program the number into your mobile phone.

Did you know that...

Every dollar spent on a poison center saves at least \$7 in unnecessary health care costs.

You can call the poison center for poison information...you don't have to have an emergency to speak to a poison expert!

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Calling the MPC...What Can You Expect?

Each year, more than 63,000 people call the Maryland Poison Center. Some are first-time callers, others have called previously. If you have never called, you may be wondering how we handle the calls we receive. Hopefully the following answers to some common questions will provide some insight.

What are some reasons for calling the MPC?

Any substance can be a poison if it is taken in the wrong way, wrong amount or by the wrong person. Here are examples of the many things we receive calls about:

- Drugs and medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, supplements, illegal/recreational or veterinary)
- Household and personal care products
- Chemicals (at home or at work)
- Plants (mushrooms, indoor and outdoor plants)
- Bites/stings (insects, snakes, animals)
- Environmentals (gases, fumes, bioterrorism)
- Food poisoning
- Anything that gives you an unwanted or unexpected reaction!

What should I do before calling the MPC?

Call as soon as you suspect a poisoning or overdose; do not wait for symptoms! Call even if you are not sure something happened or if you can't remember whether you took a dose of medicine. DO NOT make the person vomit. You can rinse out the mouth if something was swallowed or start rinsing the eye if something was splashed in the eye.

Who will I talk to?

The MPC phones are answered by pharmacists and nurses who are specially trained in toxicology. All together, the staff of the MPC has over 230 years of experience answering poisoning and overdose calls. We are the Poison Experts! In fact, nurses, doctors, pharmacists and paramedics call for assistance when treating poisoning and overdose patients. You should never feel embarrassed to call...chances are you are not the first person with that question!

What will the specialist ask me?

We will ask a lot of questions in the beginning so we can get a complete picture of what is happening. Information such as patient age, weight, allergies, health conditions and medicines being taken are important facts. We will ask for specifics about the situation: the substance, how long ago it happened, amount and symptoms. Once we have all of the information, we will use our experience combined with other resources to determine the best plan of action. You may be placed on hold briefly while calculations are done or references are consulted.

What sort of personal information do I have to provide?

We will ask for your name and phone number so we can begin a medical record. This record is treated with the same privacy protections used in your doctor's office. If you prefer not to provide this information, you do not have to. We may need the phone number to do a follow-up call to ensure symptoms have resolved or to make sure symptoms didn't develop later. We also ask for your zip code to know geographically where our calls come from, not so we can find you.

What will the specialist tell me to do?

Every case is different. Each case is managed based on the information given. Some cases can be managed with a quick drink of water; others will need more specific treatment at home. About 70% of our calls are able to be managed right where the caller is calling from. Other cases will be referred to a physician or emergency room. If we do refer you to the hospital, we will call the hospital while you are on the way to let them know why you are coming, provide recommendations for your treatment and will continue to follow up on your care until you are discharged.

Hopefully these answers have eliminated the mystery of calling the MPC. Our mission is simple...make sure poisonings and overdoses are managed efficiently and effectively. Call the MPC at 1-800-222-1222 for expert help anytime day or night!