

Poison Prevention Press

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March 16-23, 2014 is Poison Prevention Week (PPW)

Take this time to help make your world poison safe:

- Program 1-800-222-1222 into your mobile phones. Using this number you will reach a poison center 24/7 anywhere in the U.S.
- Request a poison information packet for your home, order educational materials for a group and use our home safety checklist to make sure your home is poison safe. Go to www.mdpoison.com for all of this and more!
- Read product labels carefully every time you use a household product or medicine.
- Store products in their original containers.
- Call the poison center as soon as you suspect a poisoning or overdose.

Did you know that...

- The MPC manages about 65% of calls at the site of the caller...home, work, school, etc.?
- Every dollar spent on poison centers saves \$13.39 in health care costs by keeping people out of hospitals, getting them back to work sooner and teaching prevention?



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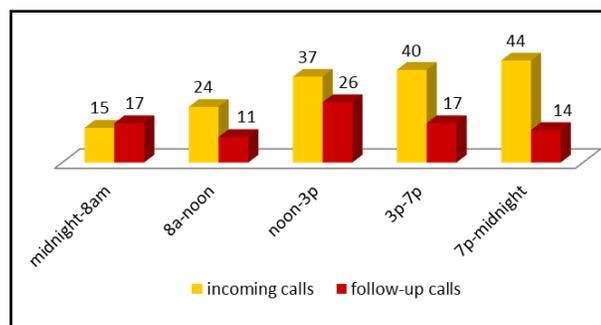
A Day in the Life of a Poison Center

"Hello poison center? I gave my child a dose of allergy medicine. My husband didn't realize this and he gave a dose 10 minutes later. Is this okay?"

"Hello poison center? I am 70 years old and I may have had some hair gel on my hands when I rubbed my eyes. What should I do? I may have rubbed my dog's eyes also."

Most people do not think about the poison center until they need its services. Much like 911, it is a resource that is there when you need it. But as we head into March and Poison Prevention Week, let's take a minute to look closer at what a typical day is like at the Maryland Poison Center.

Taking a snapshot of a single day in February, the poison specialists received 160 calls. They also made 85 follow-up calls. On this day, there were 1-3 pharmacists and/or nurses on duty at any given time. A breakdown of calls by hour can be seen here.



The incoming calls were from the public, doctors, nurses, paramedics and police officers. Many of these calls were about medicine. Other calls were about:

- Cleaners: window cleaner, pine cleaner, bleach, ammonia
- Personal care products: mouthwash, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, nail polish, deodorant, shampoo
- Foreign objects: batteries, penny
- Household products: antifreeze, fragrance oil, paint
- Miscellaneous: carbon monoxide, berries, food

The age range of the patients was 4 months to 75 years. There were even 4 calls about dogs!

For each call that comes in, a full history is taken first. The poison specialists ask many questions to get a clear picture of what has happened and how the patient is doing. Next, the specialist assesses the information and tells the caller what treatment is needed and whether it can be managed where they are or in the hospital. Finally, the specialist informs the caller of the effects that would be expected in that situation.

The work of the specialist does not end with the incoming calls. On this day, the specialists made 85 follow-up calls to check on patients in hospitals or at home who may have been having symptoms. During a follow-up call, the specialist learns how the patient is doing and what treatment they have received. They will also make additional recommendations if needed to make sure the patient is getting the best possible care.

The work of a poison specialist is challenging. They could be helping a mom with a child who ate diaper rash ointment one moment. The next moment, they are called by a doctor who is treating a patient with a multiple drug overdose. Doctors consult the poison specialists for overdoses much like they would a neurologist for a patient who has had a stroke. There could be multiple calls coming in at one time or there could be a period of time when no calls come in. Most calls are about a poisoning or overdose, but some calls are for drug identification, drug information and poison information.

If you have a question about a poisoning or overdose, know that poison experts are a phone call away by dialing 1-800-222-1222!