Fatalities
- 652 children ages 19 and under died from poisonings in 2013.\(^1\) 574 of these deaths, or 88%, were drug-related.\(^1\)
  - 90% of children (587) who died from a poisoning were ages 15 to 19.\(^1\)
  - 71% of children (460) who died from a poisoning were boys.\(^1\)
- The poisoning death rate among children has fallen 33% since reaching a peak in 2007.\(^1\)

1999-2013 Poisoning* Fatalities and Death Rate Among Children Ages 19 and Under

Injuries
- 119,003 children ages 19 and under were seen in emergency rooms for nonfatal poisonings in 2013.\(^1\)

Additional Statistics
Medication:
- In 2011, 67,700 children ages 4 and under were seen in emergency departments for accidental medication exposures, and 12,390 of these children required hospitalization.\(^2\)
• Children ages 13 to 24 months are most frequently seen in emergency departments after getting into a medication, accounting for 68% of medication-related visits for young children.2

• In emergency department cases where information is known, 38% involved a grandparent’s medicine, 31% the mother’s medicine, 12% a sibling’s medicine, 8% the father’s medicine, 5% a aunt/uncle’s medicine, and 6% known/other.2

• In emergency department cases where information is known, the pill was found on the ground or misplaced (27%), in a purse or bag (20%), on a counter or nightstand (20%), in a pillbox or bag of pills (15%). In only 6% of cases, the medicine was in a cabinet or drawer.2

• Timing of dose leads to the greatest number of dosing errors in children ages 5 and under (31% of dosing errors), followed by measurement errors (30%).2

• For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately nine occur in the home.3 4

Other poisons:
• The leading causes of non-medication exposure calls to poison control centers for children ages 5 and under were cosmetics and personal care products, household cleaning substances, foreign bodies/toys, pesticides and plants.5

• Some of the most serious household poisons other than medicine include drain openers and toilet bowl cleaners which can cause chemical burns as serious as burns from fire; nail glue removers that can cause cyanide poisoning if swallowed; and windshield washer solution that can cause blindness and death if swallowed.6

Poison control centers:
• Half of the 2 million calls to poison control centers in 2012 were for exposures and ingestions among children ages 5 and under.5

• Each dollar spent on a poison control center saves approximately $7 to $15 in unnecessary health care expenses.7 8

• The national toll-free 24-hour hotline is: 1-800-222-1222. This hotline connects the public to their local poison control center, staffed by medical professionals in poisoning management.

Carbon monoxide:
• In 2009, poison control centers reported 3,551 cases of CO exposure among children ages 19 and under.9

• Because of their high metabolic rates and high tissue oxygen demands, children are biologically at increased risk of CO poisoning when exposed to CO.10

References


Last updated February 2015. If you have a question about this factsheet, please call 202-662-0600.