



Poisoning

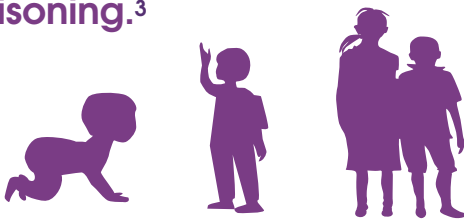
National statistics

In 2014/15 around 1,500 children under the age of 15 years were hospitalised for a poisons related injury.¹

The majority of child poisoning injuries are due to poisoning by pharmaceutical substances.²



In 2014/15, four Australian children aged 0-14 years died due to poisoning.³



MOST ACCIDENTAL POISONINGS OCCUR IN CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE, WITH TODDLERS AT THE GREATEST RISK.

Why children are at risk

Most accidental poisonings occur in children under five years of age, with toddlers at the greatest risk. As young children begin to develop skills, like walking and climbing, potentially poisonous products become easier for them to reach. Young children love to explore the world around them and part of this is often putting anything they can get into their mouths. At these ages they are curious, however can't always judge the hazards and are unable to read or understand warnings. They also like to imitate what others do, which can include behaviours like taking medications.

Common causes – how and when

The majority of hospitalisations due to poisoning in children are from pharmaceuticals. This can include prescription medications, over the counter medications and herbal or traditional products. One of the most common products involved in childhood poisoning is paracetamol, a common painkiller found in most households. Other common causes can include cleaning products, gardening products and plants. Child poisoning can occur at any time, however extra care should be taken during times where these products may be more accessible. For example, medicine may be more accessible when someone is sick or when grandparents who take medicine regularly are visiting, and cleaning products may be more accessible while they are being used.



THE MAJORITY OF CHILD CHILD HOSPITALISATIONS DUE TO POISONING ARE FROM PHARMACEUTICALS.

Key messages for prevention

Prevention

- ★ Always supervise young children.
- ★ Remember 'child resistant' does not mean 'child proof'.
- ★ Store poisons in their original containers, keep medicines separately from chemicals and cleaners and ensure both are in a high lockable cupboard.
- ★ Some medicines may need to be kept in the refrigerator – use a small lockable container to enable these medicines to be stored safely.
- ★ Do not refer to medications as 'lollies' - this can be very confusing for children.
- ★ Always read the label carefully before giving medicines.
- ★ Write down the dosage of medicine and the time given and keep this attached to the package (e.g. with an elastic band) to reduce the risk of accidental overdose.
- ★ Avoid taking medications when children are around.
- ★ Return all poisons to their safe storage area immediately after use.
- ★ Dispose of unwanted and out of date medicines. Contact your local pharmacy for advice.
- ★ Keep your handbag (and visitor's handbags) out of reach of children, as these may contain medications or other poisons.
- ★ It is important that grandparents and other family members are aware that medications should be kept out of reach of children.
- ★ Make sure you are aware of different poisons when visiting other homes.
- ★ Check that the plants in your house and garden are not poisonous.
- ★ Always keep the Poisons Information Centre phone number 13 11 26 near your phone/in your mobile phone.

Avoid taking medications when children are around.

Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26

Kidsafe is here to assist you. This information is of a general nature. If you require specific advice please contact us to discuss further.

Kidsafe Australia | www.kidsafe.com.au | national@kidsafe.com.au



References and links

1. AIHW: Pointer SC 2018. Trends in hospitalised injury, Australia 1999-00 to 2014-15. Injury research and statistics series no. 110. Cat. no. INJCAT 190. Canberra: AIHW.
2. AIHW: Pointer S 2014. Hospitalised injury in children and young people 2011-12. Injury research and statistics series no. 91. Cat. no. INJCAT 167. Canberra: AIHW.
3. AIHW: Henley G & Harrison JE 2018. Trends in injury deaths, Australia 1999-00 to 2014-15. Injury research and statistics series no. 112. Cat. no. INJCAT 192. Canberra: AIHW.