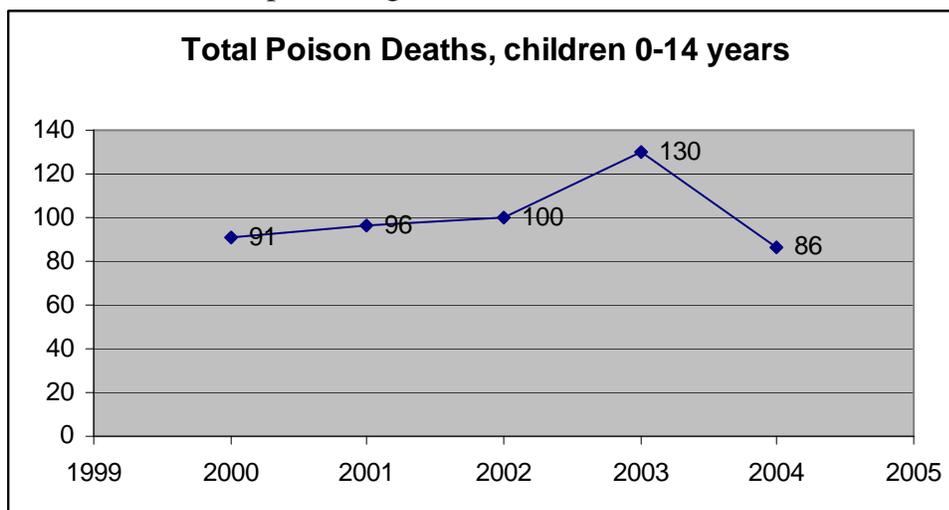


# Poison Safety

## Key Facts

- Each year, approximately 100 children ages 14 years and under die as a result of unintentional poisoning.<sup>1</sup>



- Each year, there are nearly 88,000 nonfatal poisonings to children that are treated in hospital emergency rooms.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 1.2 million unintentional poisonings among children ages 5 years and under were reported to U.S. poison control centers in 2004.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2005, nearly 63,000 drug poisonings happened to children under age 5 years.<sup>4</sup>
- Non-pharmaceutical products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants, foreign bodies and toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol are responsible for 56 percent of poisoning exposures for children under 5 years of age.<sup>5</sup>
- Each year, an estimated seven children ages 14 years and under are fatally poisoned by exposure to carbon monoxide (CO).<sup>6</sup>

## Where, When and How

- For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately 9 occur in the home.<sup>7</sup>
- Calls to poison control centers peak between 4 -11 p.m., especially during warmer months.<sup>8</sup>
- Children are poisoned by household and personal care products, medicines, vitamins, pesticides, plants, lead, and carbon monoxide.<sup>9</sup>
- Among children under 5 years of age, more than half of poisoning exposures are by products such as cosmetics, cleaning substances, plants,

toys, pesticides, art supplies, and alcohol; 44 percent of poison exposures are attributed to medicines.<sup>10 11</sup>

## **Who**

- Black children under 14 years of age have a poisoning death rate twice that of white children.<sup>12</sup>
- Children ages 5 years and under are at greatest risk for nonfatal poisoning.<sup>13</sup>
- In 2005, half of all poisoning cases occurred to children age 6 years and under.<sup>14</sup>
- Males are at a slightly higher risk for poisoning injury or death than females.<sup>15</sup>

## **Proven Interventions**

- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medicine effectively reduces the poisoning mortality rate among children ages 4 years and under.<sup>16 17 18</sup>
- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medications has saved an estimated 460 deaths among children under age 4 years from 1974 through 1992.<sup>19 20 21 22</sup>
- Poison Control Centers yield an estimated cost savings of \$290 for a cost of only \$43 per call in the United States.<sup>23</sup>
- Of cases reported to Poison Control Centers, 77 percent are managed in a non-health care facility (e.g., site of exposure, the home).<sup>24</sup>
- CO detectors are effective in preventing residential CO poisoning. It is estimated that CO detectors may prevent half of such deaths.<sup>25 26</sup>

## **Costs**

- Poison Control Centers are effective and economical because more than 70 percent of cases are resolved over the telephone while the patient remains at home. This avoids unnecessary emergency room visits, ambulance use, hospital admissions, and treatment delays.<sup>27</sup>
- If Poison Control Centers were not available nationwide, 600,000 additional poisoning victims would receive medical treatment annually at a much higher cost.<sup>28</sup>

## **Laws and Regulations**

- The Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act of 2000 established funding for a national toll-free 24-hour hotline: **1-800-222-1222**
- The toll-free 24-hour hotline connects the public to their local poison control, staffed by professionals in poisoning management.
- Only 9 states and some local jurisdictions have passed legislation requiring the use of CO detectors in homes.
- Texas enacted legislation requiring the installation of CO detectors in certain childcare facilities.<sup>29</sup>

*Suggested Citation:* Safe Kids Worldwide (SKW). Poison Safety Fact Sheet. Washington (DC): SKW, 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics System. 2000 to 2004 mortality data. Hyattsville (MD): National Center for Health Statistics, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics System. 2001 to 2005 nonfatal injury data. Hyattsville (MD): National Center for Health Statistics, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Litovitz TL, Klein-Schwartz W, Rodgers GC, et al. 2004 Annual report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System. Washington (DC): American Association of Poison Control Centers, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Consumer Product Safety Review (2005). NEISS Data Highlights –2005, Vol. 11(1).

<sup>5</sup> Litovitz T, Manoguerra A. Comparison of pediatric poisoning hazards: an analysis of 3.8 million exposure incidents. *Pediatrics* 1992 June;89(6):999-1006.

<sup>6</sup> United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Consumer Product Safety Review, Winter 2005; 9 (3): 3. Washington (DC): US CPSC, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Juris E. American Association of Poison Control Centers, 2006. Washington (DC).

<sup>8</sup> Litovitz TL, Klein-Schwartz W, Rodgers GC, et al. 2004 Annual report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System. Washington (DC): American Association of Poison Control Centers, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Litovitz TL, Klein-Schwartz W, White S, et al. 2000 Annual report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers Toxic Exposure Surveillance System. Washington (DC): American Association of Poison Control Centers, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Safe Kids Worldwide. Program Department. Washington (DC): SKW, 2006.

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<sup>15</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics System. 2000 to 2004 mortality data. Hyattsville (MD): National Center for Health Statistics, 2007.

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<sup>17</sup> Walton WE. An evaluation of the poison prevention packaging act. *Pediatrics* 1982 March;69(3):363-370.

<sup>18</sup> Rivara FP, Grossman DC. Prevention of traumatic deaths to children in the United States: how far have we come and where do we need to go? *Pediatrics* 1996 June;97(6):791-97.

<sup>19</sup> Rodgers GB. The safety effects of child-resistant packaging for oral prescription drugs. *JAMA* 1996 June;275(21):1661-65.

<sup>20</sup> Walton WE. An evaluation of the poison prevention packaging act. *Pediatrics* 1982 March;69(3):363-370.

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