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Illinois Poison Center Joins National Effort to Raise Awareness About Poison Dangers to Help Prevent Exposure, Increase Safety

*Illinois Poison Center to Participate in National Poison Prevention Week
March 19-25*

CHICAGO – For 70 years, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) has provided vital information and resources to families to help reduce the threat of poisoning and save lives.

Next week, the Illinois Poison Center, the nation’s oldest poison center, will participate in National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW) from March 19-25 to raise awareness about poison dangers and educate the public on ways to further protect their loved ones.

“The Illinois Poison Center is here 24/7 to help when needed, but an ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure where unintentional childhood poisoning is concerned,” says IPC Medical Director Michael Wahl, M.D. “IPC wants to reduce the number of accidental poisonings and encourages families to visit the Illinois Poison Center’s website to help identify potential risks and hazardous substances in their homes.”

In 2022, IPC handled 70,000 cases involving potentially harmful substances, ranging from minor to severe. IPC reports 39% of those cases involve children 5 years of age and under. Approximately one-third of IPC’s poison calls come directly from doctors seeking additional guidance on behalf of their patients about treatment plans related to harmful exposures such as overdoses, medication errors or reactions, plants, household chemicals, automotive products, insect stings/bites, lead, carbon monoxide and more.

Children are especially vulnerable to choking or accidental ingestions, but adults are also at risk. Poisoning—including drug overdoses and carbon monoxide—was the leading cause of injury-related death for adults 25-64 years old in Illinois. Poisoning accounted for more deaths in this age group than motor vehicle crashes and firearms combined, according to the state of Illinois’ *2018-2022 State Strategic Plan to Prevent Injury, Violence, and Suicide*. Hospitalizations and emergency department visit rates due to poisoning are also highest among adults ages 25-64 compared to other age groups.

Resources can be found at <https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/resources>, and include:

- A complimentary safety packet featuring a sticker, magnet and first aid tips for poisonings;
- A video library; and
- Blog posts tackling urgent, trending and seasonal topics.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers recognizes National Poison Prevention Week from March 19-25. March is also Illinois Poison Prevention Month.

IPC encourages the public to participate in Illinois Poison Prevention Week by:

- Sharing IPC's website (<https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org>) with friends and family;
- Completing IPC's free online poison prevention education course (available in both English and Spanish at <https://www.illinoispoisoncenter.org/education/poison-prevention-education>);
- Posting on social media using #NPPW23; and
- Raising awareness about IPC's toll-free, confidential expert helpline service (1-800-222-1222).

IPC's toxicology specialists, who can serve most all languages with the assistance of a professional translation line, resolve over 90% of poison exposure cases over the phone, eliminating the need for referral to a healthcare facility. Calls to the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) are free and confidential. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained nurses, pharmacists and physicians.