



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 8, 2017

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Poison Control Centers Raise Awareness and Provide Emergency Information to Counter Increase in Adolescent Suicide Attempts

ALEXANDRIA, VA – According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates have increased almost steadily, especially among adolescents and young adults, from 1999 through 2014. The nation’s poison control centers have also observed a 50 percent increase in intentional exposures by adolescents (i.e. potential suicide attempts) from 2012 to 2016. In 2016 alone, poison centers managed more than 76,500 cases of intentional exposures in young adults.

“While overall incoming call volume to poison centers continues to decrease, cases with more serious clinical outcomes, including moderate, major, or death, have increased by 4.34 percent per year since 2000,” said Stephen T. Kaminski, JD, AAPCC CEO and Executive Director. “Intentional exposures account for approximately 17 percent of total cases, with suicidal intent suspected in almost 12 percent of those cases.”

“These suspected suicide cases are extremely worrisome,” said Lee Cantrell, Pharm D., DABAT, FAACCT and Director of the San Diego Division of the California Poison Control System. “In our center alone, adolescent suicide and suicidal intent cases for the month of April were the highest we’ve observed in the past two years. Many of the more recent calls have referenced popular television shows that include messages of suicide, sometimes glamorizing suicide or inspiring deadly copycat behavior.”

Poisoning is the third most common form of suicide nationwide, after the use of a gun and suffocation. However, poisoning is the number one cause of injury death in the country, with the vast majority of fatalities resulting from drug overdoses. The nation’s poison control centers receive hundreds of calls every day about adolescents who have attempted to harm themselves, be it by taking a deadly dose of a medication, or intentionally exposing themselves to a toxic chemical, “As this dangerous increase in suicide attempts, especially in younger populations, continues, it is vital that the public take every precaution necessary to reduce the risk of adolescents and others intentionally harming themselves via poisoning.” said Kaminski.

To help prevent suicide by poison, keep all medications and pharmaceuticals, including over-the-counter medicines, stored up, away, and out of sight of children and teens, and in their original containers. Alternatively, keep these substances in cabinets secured with locks, especially if someone in your home is at high risk of suicide due to depression or a recent potentially triggering event. Finally, remove old or unneeded medications and chemicals from the home.

If someone you know has attempted to harm him or herself, seek medical attention by calling 911, the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-8255), or Poison Control (1-800-222-1222),” said Dr. Cantrell. “Intentional self-harm with substances can be clinically very complex scenarios. Seeking the medical expertise and treatment advice of poison center toxicology specialists could be lifesaving.”

Poison centers offer free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 and online at www.PoisonHelp.org. Additionally, AAPCC has made it even easier to have the poison control experts at your fingertips. TEXT “poison” to 797979, and add poison control contact information – the online tool and the hotline – to your smartphone.

Find additional poison prevention information on our [In The Home](#) and [Safe Medicine Disposal](#) web-pages.

Web: www.aapcc.org

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About American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC)

AAPCC supports the nation’s 55 poison center members in their efforts to treat and prevent drug, consumer product, animal, environmental and food poisoning. Members staff the Poison Help hotline at 1-800-222-1222 that provides free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from toxicology specialists, including nurses, pharmacists, physicians and poison information providers. In addition, AAPCC maintains the only poison information and surveillance database in the United States, providing real-time monitoring of unusual poisoning patterns, chemical exposures and other emerging public health hazards. AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as HRSA, CDC, FDA and EPA, as well as private industry. **Be prepared for a poisoning emergency and download poison control’s contact information today. Text “poison” to 797979.**