



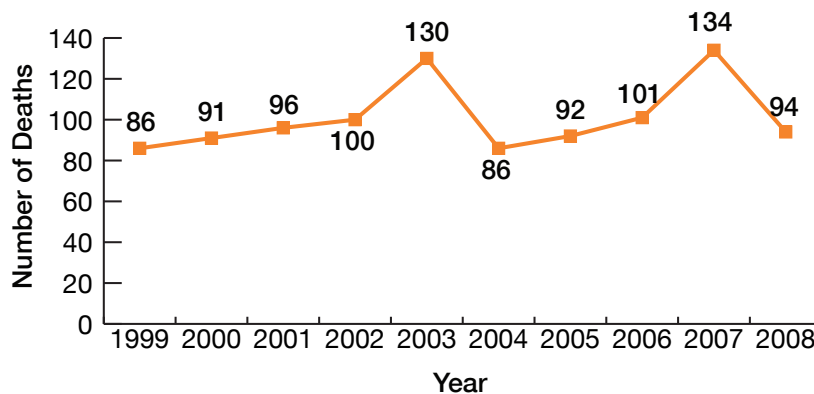
## Poison Safety



### Key Facts

- Each year since 1999, an average of 101 children ages 14 years and under died as a result of unintentional poisoning.
- In 2008, 94 children ages 14 years and under died from unintentional poisoning.

1999-2008 Unintentional Poison-Related Deaths Among Children  
(United States, Ages 14 and Under)



- Each year since 2001, an average of nearly 80,000 unintentional nonfatal poisonings among children were treated in emergency departments.
- In 2009, more than 62,000 children were treated in emergency departments for unintentional poisoning-related incidents; almost 75 percent of those treated were under 5 years of age.
- Of the approximately 2.5 million human exposure cases received by Poison Control Centers in 2009, children under age 3 were involved in almost 40 percent; more than half of calls involved children ages 5 and under.
- In 2004, almost 60 percent of poisoning cases among children under age 5 treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments were due to ingestion of oral medications.
- From 1999 to 2004, more than 20 children ages 14 and under died from unintentional, non-fire-related carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning annually.

### Where, When and How

- For every 10 poison exposures in children, approximately nine occur in the home.
- Calls to Poison Control Centers peak between 4 p.m. and 11 p.m., especially during warmer months.
- Children are poisoned by household and personal care products, medicines, vitamins, pesticides, plants, lead and CO.
- Cosmetics/personal care products, analgesics (pain killers), household cleaning substances, foreign bodies (such as toys) and topical preparations account for more than 45 percent of poisoning exposures among children ages 5 and under.

- Medications are the predominant cause of poisonings among young children, with more than 70,000 children admitted to emergency departments each year.
- Among pediatric exposures, there has been a decrease in the exposures to cough and cold medicines but an increase in exposure to analgesics (pain killers) since 2006.

### **Who**

- Male children are at a slightly higher risk of both nonfatal and fatal poisoning than female children.
- Black children ages 14 and under have a poisoning death rate more than twice that of white children.
- Among children ages 14 and under, those ages 5 and under are at greatest risk for nonfatal poisoning.
- From 2005 to 2009, medication overdose-related emergency department visits among children under 5 years of age rose by 20 percent; a majority (95 percent) of these overdoses were due to unsupervised ingestions.

### **Proven Interventions**

- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medicine effectively reduces the poisoning mortality rate among children ages 4 years and under.
- Child-resistant packaging of prescription medications has saved an estimated 460 deaths among children under 4 years of age from 1974 through 1992.
- Of cases reported to Poison Control Centers, more than 70 percent are managed in a non-health care facility (e.g., site of exposure, the home).
- One study found that audible electronic CO detectors could have prevented more than 50 percent of CO-related deaths in the study area.
- A 1996 study found that among people exposed to CO, those that had a CO detector had fewer poisoning symptoms and were less likely to be transported to a health care facility than those without a CO detector.

### **Costs**

- Poison Control Centers are effective and economical because more than 70 percent of cases are resolved over the telephone without requiring hospital services. This avoids unnecessary emergency department visits, ambulance use, hospital admissions and treatment delays.
- Poison Control Centers yield an estimated cost savings of \$320 for a cost of only \$43 per call in the U.S.
- If Poison Control Centers were not available nationwide, 600,000 additional poisoning victims would receive medical treatment annually at a much higher cost.
- On average, patients managed with Poison Control Center assistance have shorter hospitalizations, leading to a savings of more than \$2,100 per patient.
- Each dollar spent on a Poison Control Center saves approximately \$7 to \$15 in unnecessary health care expenses.

### **Laws and Regulations**

- The *Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act of 2000* provided funding to establish a national toll-free phone number for Poison Control Center services, to implement a national educational campaign and to financially stabilize regional Poison Control Centers.

- 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.
- The *Poison Prevention Packaging Act*, a federal law, required the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission to set rules requiring child-resistant packaging for certain types of household products.
- Thirty-five states and some local jurisdictions have passed legislation requiring the use of CO detectors in the home.
- Texas and Tennessee have enacted laws that require the installation of CO detectors in certain childcare facilities.
- The *Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008* bans children's products that contain more than specified levels of lead.