



UPDATE

POISON CONTROL PROGRAM

1-800-222-1222

www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov



About HRSA

The Health Resources and Services Administration is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HRSA is the primary Federal agency responsible for improving access to health care services for people who are uninsured, isolated, or medically vulnerable. For more information about HRSA and its programs, visit www.hrsa.gov.

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Poison Centers: A Valuable Resource During Gulf Coast Oil Spill

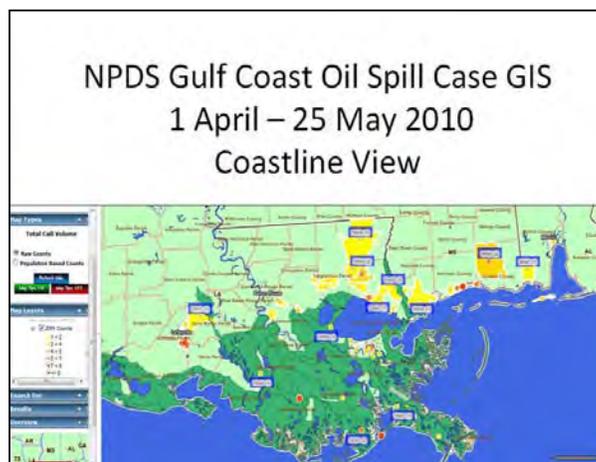
Poison centers have been integral to the country's response to the recent Gulf of Mexico oil spill, both by handling public inquiries and by collecting important public health data on oil-related poison exposures and outcomes. After it became clear that the explosion aboard the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig would cause an environmental nightmare, the Coast Guard asked Mark Ryan, managing director of the Louisiana Drug & Poison Information Center (LDPIC), for help. Through its Twitter account, the Coast Guard then urged people to call the poison center with health-related questions about the oil spill.

Since then, the LDPIC, as well as its Gulf Coast region neighbors in Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, have become go-to resources on health-related issues stemming from the spill. The centers have responded to general information calls as well as actual poison exposures, such as skin contact with oil, inhalation of toxic fumes, ingestion of contaminated foods, or exposure to the dispersants used to treat the spill. The LDPIC is prepared for an influx of calls and has arranged to re-route a portion of its calls to the Iowa Statewide Poison Control Center if needed, to ensure that help is always available.

Because the medical impact of the spill can be far-reaching and is not always obvious, the centers have prepared for a number of possible scenarios. Anticipating increased snakebites among relief workers toiling in marshlands where snakes are common, the Louisiana center surveyed local hospitals to ensure sufficient stocks of snake venom.

The impacted poison centers are also working closely with their local and state hospitals and health departments to learn the latest details about the size and direction of the spill, the dispersants used, and protocols for responding quickly and efficiently to calls. This enables them to provide up-to-date information during oil spill inquiries.

The centers also play an important role in collecting overall data on the medical outcomes of oil-related poison exposures. When someone calls the toll-free Poison Help line (1-800-222-1222) about an oil-spill-related poisoning, staff at the centers enter a tracking code to link the call to the oil spill. This marks the first time poison centers are using a single code to track the varied exposures and medical outcomes stemming from a disaster such as this, which has potentially wide-reaching impact. Poison centers are tracking their data through the National Poison Data System (NPDS), a one-of-a-kind data system that compiles information from the nation's 60 poison centers and provides near-real-time data on poison exposures. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) regularly includes NPDS data in its situational reports on the spill.



“This is an incredibly compelling illustration of the value poison centers offer to the public health system,” said Jim Hirt, executive director of the American Association of Poison Control Centers. “Poison centers were a valuable public health resource during last year’s H1N1 scare, and now, the Gulf Coast centers are prepared to respond to this oil spill.”

With free, confidential services available 24 hours a day, as well as the ability to accommodate callers in 161 different languages, poison centers are uniquely equipped to deal with this disaster. They are eager to help.

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Poison Control Program Welcomes New Director

The Poison Control Program is pleased to introduce its new director, Elisa H. Gladstone. She joined the Health Resources and Services Administration on April 26, 2010, after a successful tenure as communications director at the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). At NINR, Gladstone managed outreach to internal and external audiences regarding nursing research and NINR initiatives. Prior to her work at NINR, Gladstone was the associate director of the National Kidney Disease Education Program at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

“Elisa brings a wealth of communications and health education expertise from her experience at the National Institutes of Health. We are delighted to have her lead the next phase of the Poison Help campaign,” said Joyce Somsak, associate administrator of the Healthcare Systems Bureau.

Gladstone received her master’s of public health degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and earned her undergraduate degree in sociology from Emory University. She can be reached at egladstone@hrsa.gov or (301) 594-4394.

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National Poison Prevention Week Gets Active

The *National Poison Prevention Week Council* and the nation's poison centers got active this year on and offline for *National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW)* held March 14-20. Through online sites, e-cards, texts, games, social networking, poster contests, local events, and a national proclamation, the Council and centers worked during *NPPW* to increase discussion of poison prevention across the country.

Many efforts involved online activities during *NPPW*. For the first time, the [NPPW Council](#) launched [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) pages that focused on poison prevention. The Council's [Twitter](#) page has more than 60 followers to date and includes Web sites, tips, and key messages around poison prevention. Its [Facebook](#) group has more than 100 members and continues to grow.



The California and Illinois poison centers also launched Facebook pages during *NPPW*. Moreover, California's center launched an [e-card service](#), a free poison prevention tips text messaging service, and a "[Pills Versus Candy](#)" online game that tests how well people differentiate medicine and candy. In Illinois, the center supplemented its Facebook efforts by launching a new online [Poison Prevention Education Resource Center](#) in both English and Spanish. Additionally, the American Association of Poison Control Centers' Central Office commemorated the week through daily Web site updates featuring a "Poison Prevention Tip" of the day.

In addition to these online activities, the *NPPW Council* conducted its annual nationwide poster contest to engage communities in helping to ensure the safety of children and adults. This year, the first place older division winning poster, titled "Send the Right Message," was created by Mariola of Grand Island, NE. The first place younger division winning poster was created by Brook of Lawton, OK, and titled "Whooo Said Poisons Can't Hurt You." The [2010 NPPW posters](#) were distributed to council members, poison centers, and 73 community organizations, including military bases, pharmacies, schools, and the Boys and Girls Club of America. To date, the council has distributed more than 1,200 of each poster across the country.

Child-focused activities were also held by the North Texas Poison Center during its "Poison Jungle Safari" at the Tyler, TX, zoo. Parents and children learned about poisons, including snake bites and plants, by participating in fun and interactive activity stations around the zoo.

Adults were the focus in Upstate New York, where the poison center partnered with Walgreen's Pharmacies and the Prevention Network of Central New York to sponsor a drug disposal day. Consumers dropped off outdated or expired medicines safely, conveniently, and in compliance with the latest [FDA guidelines](#). The day resulted in nearly 300 pounds of prescription and over-the-counter drugs that were collected and transported to a disposal site for incineration.

At the national level, the *NPPW Council* secured a [presidential proclamation](#) from President Obama, which highlights the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. The presidential proclamation tradition started in 1962, with the first being signed by John F. Kennedy, and has continued with every president thereafter.

Ideas for next year's *NPPW* (March 20-26, 2011) are already in the pipeline. Start your planning early, and be sure to download HRSA's [National Poison Prevention Week Planner](#) and check with your poison center about how your community is celebrating this important milestone.

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Posters created by 2010 poster contest winners Mariola from Nebraska (top) and Brook from Oklahoma (bottom)

Poison Help Campaign Update

The national [Poison Help](#) campaign continues to move forward in promoting the 1-800-222-1222 Poison Help line. To advance its campaign efforts, HRSA has set several activities in motion to benchmark awareness of the number and expand the Poison Help audience.

HRSA has been working in collaboration with the American Association of Poison Control Centers ([AAPCC](#)) and poison educators to develop a pilot advertisement campaign for Hispanic-American audiences. The pilot seeks to raise awareness about poisonings and the Poison Help line in the Hispanic community. Results from this campaign will be shared in future newsletters and will provide HRSA, AAPCC, and poison educators with new tools to reach Hispanic audiences.

HRSA will continue to keep you apprised of the latest Poison Help news, including its upcoming redesigned Poison Help Web site, which will be available in both English and Spanish. This new resource will help grow the Poison Help campaign's outreach to even more audiences in the future.

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New Reports Highlight Important Substance Abuse Treatment Statistics in Key Metropolitan Areas Across the Country



The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has developed a series of [Metro Briefs](#) providing detailed statistical snapshots of substance abuse treatment activities occurring in 27 metropolitan areas. This series of briefs is based on SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), which collects information on the characteristics of people admitted to substance abuse treatment, and the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS), an annual survey of treatment facilities.

Each brief provides a wide range of information about the nature and scope of substance abuse treatment admissions in a metropolitan area through a variety of charts, graphs, and accompanying text. This information includes:

- Key demographic characteristics of treatment admissions (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity)
- Breakdowns on the substances of abuse involved in treatment admissions
- Breakdowns on the admission referral sources for admissions (e.g., community organizations, individuals/self, criminal justice systems)
- The types of care provided by area facilities (e.g., outpatient, residential, detoxification)

These [briefs](#) were developed by SAMHSA as part of its strategic initiative on data, outcomes, and quality in an effort to create integrated data systems that help inform policymakers and providers on behavioral health issues.

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Poison Centers in the News

The Florida Poison Information Center in Tampa grapples with a potentially dwindling supply of [coral snake antivenin](#). Visit the Center's [Web site](#) for the latest updates.

Dr. Toby Litovitz from the National Capital Poison Center sheds light on the dangers posed by ingestion of [lithium cell batteries](#) among young children.

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Poison Prevention Tips for the Summer Season

During the summer, be aware of poison prevention tips and share them with your family and friends to avoid any poisoning risks as the summer heats up.

- Be sure that everyone in your family can identify poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. Remember, "leaves of three, let it be." If someone touches one of these plants, rinse right away with plenty of running water for at least five minutes.
- Use a thermometer when cooking and reheating foods. That will help you to know when they are safe to eat.
- Do not let food sit out at room temperature for more than two hours.
- If a poisonous snake bites you or someone you know, call 1-800-222-1222 right away.
- Unless you are a plant expert, do not pick your own foods to eat in the wild. Only experts can tell poisonous mushrooms from safe mushrooms.
- Be sure to check the label on any insect repellent. Most contain DEET. Do not allow children to apply repellent to themselves. Have an adult do this for them.
- Program the toll-free Poison Help line (1-800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post the number by your phone at home.



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Save the Dates

North American Congress of Clinical Toxicology

Denver, CO

October 7-12, 2010

This annual [conference](#) brings physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and scientists together from around the world to share knowledge on a wide variety of issues in clinical toxicology. Conference events include research paper presentations, symposia, and traditional and novel continuing education sessions.

2010 International Symposium on Safe Medicine

Portland, ME

October 10-12, 2010

The oldest continuous drug disposal conference in the United States, the International Symposium on Pharmaceuticals in the Home and Environment will return as the 2010 International Symposium on Safe Medicine.

At the event:

- Meet with the leading authorities on prescription drug use, abuse, return, and disposal
- Attend cutting edge educational symposia and panel sessions
- Build your skills at expert-led pre-conference technical assistance workshops
- Participate in lively specialized topic interest groups
- Enjoy special networking opportunities, exhibits, and an annual film festival

Visit the conference [Web site](#) to learn more.

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Now Accepting Newsletter Submissions



Your story or announcement could appear in the next edition of the *Poison Control Program Update*. Contact Rebeca Sanchez-Barrett at rsanchez-barrett@hrsa.gov or (301) 443-0324 with your submissions or questions.

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