

Poisoning Toolkit



West Australian
Poisons Information Centre
13 11 26
24 hour • Australia Wide

Background



What is poisoning?

Poisoning occurs when people unintentionally drink, eat, breathe, inject or touch enough of a hazardous substance that it results in illness or death.⁽¹⁾ There are many different sources of poison, including; plants, food, medications, cleaning and pesticide products.

Why is poison safety important?

In Western Australia (WA) between 2011 and 2015, 642 people died and 7,887 people were hospitalised due to accidental poisoning.⁽²⁾ In 2015 alone, the 1,473 hospitalisations due to poisoning consumed 5,009 bed days at an approximate cost of \$10,139,329.⁽²⁾

The causes of a poisoning event and its incidence vary between population groups, with individuals aged 0-4 years experiencing the highest rate of poisonings in WA.⁽²⁾

How can we prevent poisonings?

Fortunately, there are simple behaviours that can reduce the incidence of poisoning. Many safety actions can happen around the home, such as safe storage and labeling of poisons. People can reduce their risk of poisoning by;⁽³⁻⁵⁾

- Checking the home surrounds for poisonous substances and products (including plants in the garden and chemicals in the shed);
- Storing poisons in cupboards with child resistant locks or in a lockable cupboard preferably 1.5m above the ground;
- Tightly closing and returning all poisons to their safe storage location immediately after use;
- Storing poisonous products in their original containers and away from food.
- Always using medicines as outlined on the label, not consuming them in the dark or in front of children;
- Disposing expired medicines or medicines which are no longer needed at a local pharmacy; and
- Keeping the WA Poisons Information Centre phone number (13 11 26) in an accessible location near their phone.

What organisations conduct work in poison safety in WA?

Each year approximately 21,000 Western Australians phone the [WA Poisons Information Centre](#) for free expert advice on the management of poisonings or suspected poisonings. In 2016, 38% of the calls were parents of young children and 22% were medical professionals requesting advice on patient management.⁽⁶⁾

[Kidsafe WA](#) communicate the importance of preventing poisonings in children via their Safety Demonstration House, Information Sessions and Resources.

Through the Check Your Medicines campaign, Injury Matters' [Stay On Your Feet®](#) program encourages older adults to stay healthy and independent by safely managing their medications.

What role do Local Governments have in poison safety?



In addition to providing community members with a safe place to live, local governments have a responsibility to support the health of its residents. As a poisoning incident can significantly impact the health of residents, it is important for local governments to communicate common poisoning causes and methods of prevention.

How can your Local Government or organisation get involved in poison safety?

	ACTIVITY
AWARENESS RAISING	Contact local radio stations or newspapers to promote poison safety messages.
	Use local statistics on the incidence of poisoning to raise awareness of local incidence at events, on social media or at educational sessions.
COMMUNITY	Set up a stall or stand in your reception area, recreation centre, local shopping centre, local schools, childcare centres and child health units.
	Display posters and distribute educational resources.
	Display reminders of how to store poisons safely within community facilities e.g. in the kitchen of a community hall.
PARTNERSHIPS	Partner with local organisations and parent groups to implement poisoning prevention activities.
	Contact other organisations who are conducting poisoning prevention activities.
	Promote positive poison safety practices being completed by other organisations, community groups or schools in your area.
	Educate local businesses about the importance of correctly labelling hazardous chemicals in a workplace.

Located within this toolkit are a range of media templates and suggestions for activities that local governments can conduct to generate poison awareness amongst your residents.



Communication Templates



Social media is a great channel to generate awareness within your community about the importance of conducting safe behaviours to prevent poisonings from occurring. Over the next two pages Injury Matters has developed social media templates and a media release for Local Governments and organisations to use to generate this awareness.

Facebook

1. Our youngest community members are most at risk of #poisoning in #WA. Save 13 11 26 to your phone and call the Poisons Information Centre from anywhere in Australia to receive advice on any possible human poisoning from chemicals, medicines, plants, bites and stings.
2. Practicing safe storage behaviours is essential to preventing poisoning in children however it is not only children who consume poisons. If medicines expire or are no longer needed, dispose of them at your local pharmacy to avoid wrongful dosages.
3. Remember to store poisons in cupboards which are lockable or have childproof locks in operation, preferably 1.5m above the ground. It is important to remember that child resistant does not mean child proof.
4. Dangerous poisons like medicines and cleaning products can easily be mistaken for food or drinks, especially by children. Always store poisonous products away from food. Find out more <http://ow.ly/PecF30mFg9i> [pair with image 1]



Image 1: use similar comparisons on social media to draw attention to the ease of confusing poisons for popular drinks.

Twitter

1. Poisoning is preventable. For the wellbeing of your family and friends, save the WA Poisons Centre 13 11 26 into your phone and keep yourself informed here <http://www.scgh.health.wa.gov.au/OurServices/WAPIC/FactSheets.html>
2. It's not just children that can accidentally consume poisons. Keep yourself and your family safe by disposing of old medications at your local pharmacy, rather than the back of your cupboard.
3. Each year approximately 21,000 Western Australians phone the WA Poisons Information Centre for free expert advice on the management of poisonings or suspected poisonings. If you suspect you or someone you love has consumed poison, call 13 11 26.

Blog Topic Ideas

1. What to do if you suspect your child has inhaled, swallowed or otherwise been in contact with a poison - even if there are no obvious signs.
2. Where to dispose hazardous materials in your local government; from paint products, batteries, pesticides, pool chemicals and ink/printer cartridges.
3. Highlight local medical centres or emergency services.

Media Release Template



Poisons: prevention is key

In Western Australia (WA), children experience the highest rate of poisonings. With so many sources of poison, including food, medications and products, we are urging all members of the public to be aware of what to do should you or someone you love be poisoned.

It is not only children who can experience accidental poisoning. In WA, between 2011 and 2015, 642 people died and 7,887 people were hospitalised due to accidental poisoning.⁽²⁾ In 2015 alone, the 1,473 hospitalisations due to poisoning consumed 5,009 bed days at an approximate cost of \$10,139,329.⁽²⁾

Local Government Representative says, "Poisoning is a serious issue particularly for very young members of our community. Children under the age of four experience the highest rate of poisoning. The reasons for these poisonings can vary but they can be prevented."

"Thankfully, poisonings are preventable with correct storage, labelling and simple behaviours, we can reduce the risk of poisoning across age groups."

A poisoning occurs when people unintentionally drink, eat, breathe, inject or touch enough of a hazardous substance that it results in illness or death.⁽¹⁾

"People can reduce their risk of poisoning by storing poisons in child-proofed cupboards preferably at least 1.5m off the ground, tightly closing lids on medications and products, disposing of old medications correctly, and not consuming them in the dark or in front of children," says **Local Representative**.

If you are not sure what to do, Western Australians can call the WA Poisons Information Centre 24 hour hotline on 13 26 13 for free expert advice on the management or poisonings or suspected poisonings.

Always call 000 if symptoms are severe or you feel life is in danger.

- ENDS -

What support can Injury Matters provide?



To assist you in communicating the prevalence of poisonings in your local area, Injury Matters can provide you with data regarding the number of hospitalisations and deaths within your local government or health region due to poisonings.

Located on Know Injury's Knowledge Hub are a number of fact sheets, resource kits and information to support health and community professionals conduct injury prevention activities. These tools can assist local government workers who are developing initiatives which aim to reduce the prevalence of poisonings within their local area.

Finally Injury Matters have relationships with a number of external organisations who lead the way in reducing the incidence of poisonings in WA. If you are interested in finding out what other work is being conducted to prevent injuries, including poisonings, please contact us so that we can assist you to locate this information.

Partner:



Department of
Health



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Connect with Know Injury



www.knowinjury.org.au



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[@KnowInjury](https://twitter.com/KnowInjury)

References

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