

## Poisonings in Virginia, 2009

- Poisonings were the second leading cause of injury death and injury hospitalization during 2009; resulting in 769 deaths and 7,417 hospitalizations.
- The median cost per episode of care was \$9,594 with an average length of stay of 3 days.
- More than 118 million dollars were billed due to poisoning related hospitalizations.
- 78% of poisoning hospitalizations were self-inflicted, while 74% of poisoning deaths were unintentional.

## Look at Two Virginia Poisoning Cases:

- During a visit to a grandparent's home, a 2 year old female was discovered screaming and standing next to an open container of hair straightening lotion. Blisters were later noted on her lips, chin and hand. She refused to eat or drink anything. Examination at the hospital revealed superficial mucosal burns in the mouth and throat which slowly healed over the following ten days.
- Mistaking it for her eye drop medication, a 61 year old female put several drops of instant glue into her left eye. Her eyelids and lashes were immediately sealed shut by the adhesive. Attempts to rinse the eye were not successful. She eventually had the adhesive removed by an ophthalmologist and was treated for corneal injury. Two weeks later, her pain had resolved and she had normal vision.



## Poisonings Among Children and Adolescents

- Over 50% of poisoning exposures reported to Virginia Poison Control Network occurred among children younger than 6 years.
- The most common chemicals involved in these childhood poisonings are cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning agents, pain killers; and others such as vitamin and mineral supplements, cough and cold preparations, pesticides, and antihistamines.
- Over 97% of exposures among 12 year olds and younger reported to Virginia Poison Control Network were unintentional. In contrast, almost 52% of adolescent poisonings are intentional.
- When the poison center is called quickly after a suspected child poisoning, about 90% of the time they can tell you how to safely care for the child without going to a doctor.
- In 2009, there were 417 confirmed cases of elevated lead levels in children 6 years and younger.

## Prevention Tips

Poisoning can be prevented. Health care agencies, safety advocates, and parents can all support a reduction in poisonings by:

- Putting the Poison Center phone number on or near every phone: 1-800-222-1222.
- Taking medicine where children can't watch because they learn by imitating adults.
- Storing medications, cleaning products and other household chemicals away from children in locked cabinets.
- Using properly labeled and child resistant packaging.
- Only taking medicine prescribed to you.
- Keeping household products in their original containers.
- Reading the label before giving medicine or using a household product. Turn on the light and put on your glasses if you need them to read.

## Resources:

- **Virginia Poison Center**  
([www.poison.vcu.edu](http://www.poison.vcu.edu)) 1-800-222-1222
- **National Capital Poison Center**  
([www.poison.org/](http://www.poison.org/)) 1-800-222-1222
- **Blue Ridge Poison Center**  
([www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/brpc/](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/brpc/))  
1-800-222-1222
- **Poison Prevention.org**

Division of Injury and Violence Prevention  
Virginia Department of Health  
1-800-732-8333  
[www.vahealth.org/injury](http://www.vahealth.org/injury)