



## American Association of Poison Control Centers

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# NEWS RELEASE

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### **American Association of Poison Control Centers Urges Safe Use of Prescription Painkillers** *AAPCC Observes Annual National Poison Prevention Week*

ALEXANDRIA, VA. – In observance of National Poison Prevention Week, the American Association of Poison Control Centers is warning Americans about the importance of using and storing prescription painkillers carefully and correctly, according to Mike Wahl, MD, FACEP, FACMT, medical director of the Illinois Poison Center.

“The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration state that prescription drug abuse is an epidemic,” Wahl said. “Prescription painkillers, specifically, are responsible for the bulk of this public health crisis. National Poison Prevention Week is a good time to remind Americans that prescription painkiller abuse does not discriminate – this epidemic hits the young and old, men and women, and people in all income levels.”

Since 1962, the third week in March has been designated National Poison Prevention Week and has focused national attention on the dangers of poisonings and how to prevent them. America’s 57 poison centers are committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of every American through poison prevention and free, confidential, expert medical services. Poison centers respond to calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week in order to help those who have been exposed to toxic substances.

In 2011, U.S. poison centers fielded more than 3.6 million calls, including about 2.3 million cases of human exposures to poisons. Painkillers (analgesics) were the number one substance most frequently involved in all human exposure cases reported to poison center in 2011. In addition, analgesic (painkiller) exposures as a class increased more rapidly than any other substance over the past 11 years, according to the AAPCC’s National Poison Data System.

Experts at America’s poison centers offer the following tips to keep yourself and others as safe as possible around prescription painkillers:

- Get rid of prescription painkillers as soon as you are finished using them. Don’t give a drug seeker the opportunity to find some in your home. Call your local poison center at 1-800-222-1222 for advice on drug disposal.

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- If you are currently using prescription painkillers, store them safely. Listen for the click when resealing the bottle, and lock them up where they can't be accessed by another individual or curious child.
- Be aware of the dangers these drugs can pose. Never change your dose without talking to your doctor first.
- Using these drugs without a doctor's prescription can be deadly, even the first time using them.
- If you or someone you know is addicted to these drugs, seek help immediately. Talk to your doctor about ways to reduce your risk of overdose.
- Be aware of the symptoms of overdose in another and be prepared to offer first aid. Symptoms may include dizziness, fainting, vomiting, and difficult or ragged breathing. If you witness an overdose in progress, dial 9-1-1 or the poison center at 1-800-222-1222 immediately.

For more information, contact Loreeta Canton, director of public relations and member services for the American Association of Poison Control Centers, at 703.894.1858 or [canton@aapcc.org](mailto:canton@aapcc.org) or visit [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org).

**About the American Association of Poison Control Centers:**

*The AAPCC supports the nation's 57 poison centers 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, the 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. The AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as EPA, HRSA and the CDC, as well as private industry.*

*To learn more, visit [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org), like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or read our blog at [aapcc.wordpress.com](http://aapcc.wordpress.com). To join your voice with other poison center supporters, register for the AAPCC advocacy network at [www.capwiz.com/aapcc](http://www.capwiz.com/aapcc) – click on “Action E-List.”*