



**21 May 2009**

## **Large spike in paracetamol poisonings**

New figures from the NSW Poisons Information Centre show it received more than 8,000 calls regarding suspected paracetamol overdose last year, half of them in children.

“The centre received more than 119,000 calls from throughout Australia last year, almost 80,000 from NSW, 50 per cent relating to accidental poisoning in children – of these 15 per cent were hospitalised,” the Minister said.

“Of most concern is the amount of people, particularly children, who have ingested large doses of over-the-counter medicines.

“The Poisons Centre received by far the most calls for paracetamol, while ibuprofen (Nurofen) and cough and cold medicines are also an area of concern.

“The number of calls relating to paracetamol has more than doubled in just four years, from 3847 in 2005 to 8067 last year,” the Minister said.

Deputy Medical Director of NSW Poisons Information Centre, Dr Naren Gunja, said the majority of these calls relate to incidents which could have been avoided if the medications were locked away and kept out of the reach of children.

“Most accidental poisonings occur in children younger than five, with children aged between one and three most at risk, in western Sydney,” he said.

Some helpful tips:

- Store medicines and chemicals out of sight and reach of children, at least 1.5 metres off the ground and in a locked, child-resistant container;
- Use medicines and chemicals safely by following given instructions and return them to safe storage immediately after use;
- Buy products in child-resistant containers and use child-resistant locks on cupboards or cabinets that store medications and poisons;
- Ensure all products are stored in their original containers and are clearly labelled;
- Be alert to household poisons outside the home which are stored in the garage or garden shed; and
- Take extra care when the household routine changes – when on holiday, moving house, when hosting visitors or during times of family stress.

“Young children are natural explorers and are at most risk of poisoning due to their curious nature, these simple precautions can potentially save a life,” Mr Della Bosca said.

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The Poisons Information Centre can be contacted on 13 11 26.

For more information about poisoning prevention go to: [www.poisonsinfo.nsw.gov.au](http://www.poisonsinfo.nsw.gov.au)

