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IPC Sees 10-Year High in Reported Teen Self-Harm by Drug Ingestion
Nation's oldest poison center urges focus on youth mental health

As communities across the country host events marking National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day on May 4, recent data from the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) shows that reported cases of self-harm by drug ingestion in Illinois teenagers are increasing, both in number and severity. Between 2007 and 2016:

- Self-harm ingestions reported to the IPC in those aged 13 to 19 increased 89 percent, from 3,087 cases in 2007 to 5,821 cases in 2016;
- 27 percent of the reported cases resulted in serious harm in 2016, compared to only 16 percent of cases in 2007;
- 94 percent of cases of self-harm ingestion in adolescents managed by the IPC were drug overdoses; and
- Cases of adolescent self-harm ingestion from antidepressants, antihistamines, cardiovascular drugs, and dietary supplements have all increased over the past 10 years.

"The troubling rise in the number of self-harm ingestions in teenagers reported to the IPC is a clear sign of the urgency behind initiatives like National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day," says Michael Wahl, M.D., medical director, IPC. "Mental health is a lifelong concern, but it's especially important that we work to recognize the signs of emotional distress in adolescents and address their mental health needs."

Connecting children and adolescents with the appropriate resources is a critical component of suicide prevention and ensuring access to mental healthcare. Clinical and administrative experts in the Illinois Health and Hospital Association's Behavioral Health Advisory Forum recently developed [Illinois Youth Resources for Mental Health, Well-Being & Resilience](#) as a guide with an emphasis on suicide prevention and marginalized youth. Resources include helplines, direct services and additional supports for families, parents, caregivers, professionals, and the media. In addition, the guide is intended to support community collaboration and coordination to enhance health and well-being. For the Spanish-language version of the guide, [click here](#).

[National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day](#) emphasizes integrating behavioral health and primary care for children, youth and young adults with mental and/or substance use disorders. This year's theme—"Partnering for Help and Hope"—will be front and center at a panel discussion on adolescent mental health needs hosted by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in Washington, D.C.

The IPC can serve as a life-saving resource when potential poisonings occur, including situations involving self-harm ingestions in children or adults. With a phone call, Illinoisans of any age can immediately access comprehensive information and treatment advice. IPC experts are available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. If you suspect that you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the IPC at 800-222-1222. The call is free and confidential. For more information, visit the IPC's website: <http://illinoispoisoncenter.org>.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.