



A Program of the
Metropolitan Chicago
Healthcare Council

For Immediate Release

February 27, 2009

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Illinois Poison Center Celebrates Poison Prevention Month

(Chicago) – Year after year, millions of accidental poisonings occur in America – the majority of them affecting children. Last year, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) handled more than 98,444 exposure and information calls – 52 percent involving children age 5 and under – on everything from household chemicals and carbon monoxide to medicines and mushrooms.

Each year, the third week in March is recognized as National Poison Prevention Week; however, Governor Pat Quinn has declared March 2009 to be Illinois Poison Prevention Month and encourages all residents to educate themselves about the potentially dangerous substances in their homes.

"Poison prevention education is vital to the public's safety," said Michael Wahl, MD, managing medical director, IPC. "By using the entire month of March as a means to increase awareness of this serious health issue, we hope to reduce the incidence and injury caused by poisonings."

Help is a Phone Call Away

Illinois Poison Center outreach staff will dedicate the month of March to educating Illinois residents that they can reach the poison center 24 hours a day via a toll-free phone number, **1-800-222-1222**. With the IPC's help, 90 percent of poison exposure calls from the general public are managed at the site of exposure without referral to a health care facility by providing simple first aid instructions over the phone.

Take Action to Prevent Poisonings

According to Illinois Poison Center experts, preparing yourself and your family is the best way to avoid a potential poisoning.

IPC Tips to Prevent Poisonings:

- Make sure all potential poisons are out of the sight and reach of children
- Keep medicines and household products in their original containers with original labels
- Always read labels before using medicines, cleaners and other products
- Teach children to ask first before eating or drinking anything
- Never call medicine candy or make a game out of taking it
- Keep the IPC phone number, 1-800-222-1222, near all phones in the house and store the number on your cell

Established by Congress in 1961, National Poison Prevention Week, March 15-21, 2009, is an opportunity to educate communities on poison prevention and the dangers of unintentional poisonings.

The Illinois Poison Center serves all of Illinois – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice on household products, medication issues, alcohol and drug misuse, bites and stings and other poisonings. The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council.