

THE YUK REPORT

Expert Poison Information 24/7

Washington Poison Center

1-800-222-1222

Winter 2009

Q. & A. with Jim Williams, Executive Director

Jim Williams, Executive Director of the Washington Poison Center sits down to answer questions about the changes at the WAPC due to significant funding cuts.

Q. What happened to the Poison Center's funding?

A. The WAPC was among several nonprofit organizations that received less funding support from the state's 2009-2011 budget. State funding support for WAPC's services was cut by 37% or approximately \$750,000 each

year. Historically state funding support for WAPC services, which is mandated by state statute, has represented 80% of the WAPC's total revenue.

Q. Is the Poison Center still open 24/7?

A. Yes, the Poison Center's free poison help phone line is still answered by specially-trained nurses, pharmacists and other poison information specialists 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – including weekends and holidays. A change

that may be noticed by callers is the phone tree. Due to the reduction in staff, we had to initiate a phone tree to help triage calls and longer wait times are a result as well.

questions about poisons related to animals. Our State contract does not cover the costs to answer animal questions, requiring us to charge callers. Without the charge, we would have been forced to discontinue providing this important service.

Did you know . . .

- . . . last fall & winter, there were 1,288 calls about accidental overdoses of cold & flu medications?
- . . . you can become a friend on Facebook and Twitter?
- . . . the WAPC received the most calls in one day on Thanksgiving 1990, when the power went out and turkeys were half cooked? (for more on turkey food safety: www.wapc.org)

Q. Will the Poison Center be here a in a year or two?

A. We certainly hope so. We are looking for additional sources of funding, exhausting every possibility. Some of the sacrifices we've made cannot continue to go on indefinitely, such as a freeze on staff wages, high call volume to low staff ratio, and limited outreach to the public and medical professionals.

Q. Who is over seeing the medical direction?

A. Our call room staff has remained supported by a physician toxicologist 24/7. Dr. William Hurley continues to fill the Medical Director role; however his time for the administrative side of medical direction has been severely cut.

Q. Why are you charging for Pet/Animal calls?

A. Due to the budget cut, we initiated a \$30 fee for answering

Q. Can I still get Mr. Yuk stickers?

A. Yes! If you just need a sheet or two (10 stickers per sheet) you can call 1-800-222-1222 and ask for a Yuk Pack. If you need more than a few sheets or interested in other prevention materials, please visit our website to download an order form, www.wapc.org. Schools and small nonprofits can qualify for free Mr. Yuk stickers. Additional materials are available to download for no cost.

From the Files

VOICE OF DALE

I called Poison Control because my partner, Audrey, had accidentally put her ear drops into her left eye. She was in a ton of pain at first, and yelled at me to call. I did and Dale answered. Being a health care professional myself for many years, I was very impressed with his calm, patient and kind demeanor. He listened to me carefully and then gave me exact instructions about what Audrey needed to do for her eye. I was kind of upset because I am not used to seeing her hurting like that, and so I had him repeat the instructions. He did so in a very patient manner, not an ounce of judgment was palpable in his voice. He instructed me to call back in an hour after she had followed his instructions. I did so and again he showed concern, advised me of what she should do in the next 2 days, and invited me to call him back should there be further problems. I haven't heard a kinder, gentler voice over the phone, ever. He was great; professional without being stuffy, very humane and most of all very cool and collected. That's so important in a job like his.

Pam Castanera and Audrey Reedy
Bellingham WA

Trouble in the Cold and Flu Season

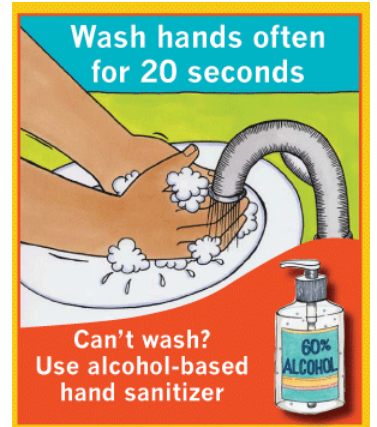
Last month, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg combined prescription and over-the-counter medications landing the 76-year-old in the hospital. Although the Justice Ginsburg is quoted as saying she was “dumb,” drug mishaps like this are a common occurrence, especially among seniors. Poison Centers across the nation are specially trained to help in similar circumstances, especially during cold and flu season.

The medical staff at the WAPC is ready to answer your calls about cold and flu medications. During last year’s fall and winter, the WAPC took 2,303 such calls. The WAPC is expecting the number of these types of calls to increase this year due to the H1N1 virus (also known as Swine Flu) making its way into schools and workplaces.

Below are tips based on commonly asked questions to the WAPC:

- Children younger than four should not get over-the-counter cold or cough medicine. To ease cold symptoms, give extra fluids, use a nasal aspirator, and consider using a humidifier.
- Choose medicines only for the symptoms. You can give one multi-symptom OTC medicine – as long as it fits the symptoms.
- Pay attention to label abbreviations like Tbsp (tablespoon) and Tsp (teaspoon), oz. (ounces), ml. (milliliter), and mg. (milligram) AND use the packaged measuring device.

- Dose OTC medication according to the directions based on age and weight. Read the “Warnings” sections for possible drug interactions and side effects. Call the Poison Center with questions.
- Don’t give two over-the-counter medicines with the same active ingredients. For example, many cold medicines contain acetaminophen – which is the same as Tylenol.
- If medicine is vomited or spit up, don’t give another dose. Instead, call 1-800-222-1222 for instructions. Ask if you can mix the medication with a favorite food or drink.
- Never give a child OTC medicines that are meant for adults. Use only products that are labeled for use in babies, infants, or children (“for pediatric use”).
- Be certain of the dose and medication. If you have any doubts, call the Poison Center for advice from one of its specially-trained pharmacists, nurses or poison specialists.



Don’t Guess. Be Sure. Call the Poison Center 24/7 @ **1-800-222-1222**.

Learn the Facts: Hand Sanitizers - visit wapc.org

Mr. Yuk invites the Legislators to a Tour!



Legislators toured the Washington Poison Center on October 15th. Senator Ken Jacobsen (D-Seattle), Representative Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney (D-Seattle), Representative Scott White (D-Seattle), Representative Ruth Kagi’s (D-Seattle) legislative aid Allison Krutsinger, and Policy Analyst Carl Schroder toured the center.

During the tour they learned about our involvement in emergency preparedness, senior medication management, threat identification, and the daily calls for help and information from the public and healthcare professionals. They left with a better understanding of the safety net we provide for the citizen’s of Washington State. We are honored that they took time out of their busy schedule to visit the Washington Poison Center.

Support Mr. Yuk

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