



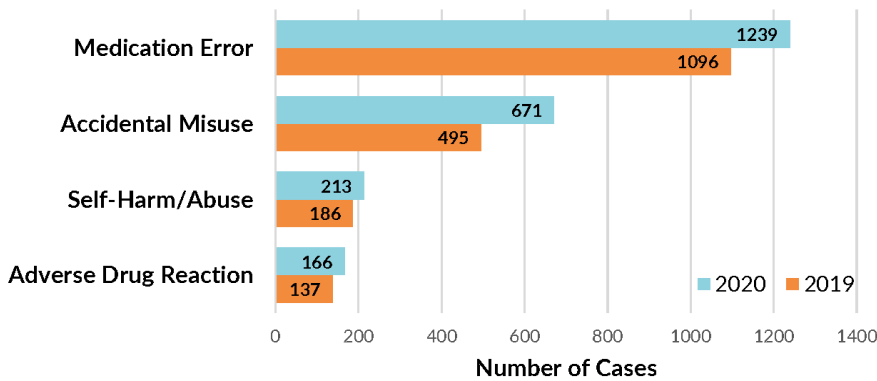
Exposure Trends During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Special Focus: Adults 60 Years and Older

Issued August 12, 2020 | Contact mryuk@wapc.org with questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed older adults at greater risk of both accidental and intentional poisoning. Isolation, increased stress and anxiety, disrupted daily routines, and/or decreased access to basic needs, special services, and caregiver support have resulted in significant increases in medication errors and accidental misuse of household cleaning substances/disinfectants, as well as smaller increases in intentional self-harm and abuse. The following data compares poison exposures in adults ages 60 and older that were reported to the Washington Poison Center during the first 6 months of 2020 (January 1–June 30) to those reported in the first 6 months of 2019.

Exposure Reasons for Adults ≥60 years

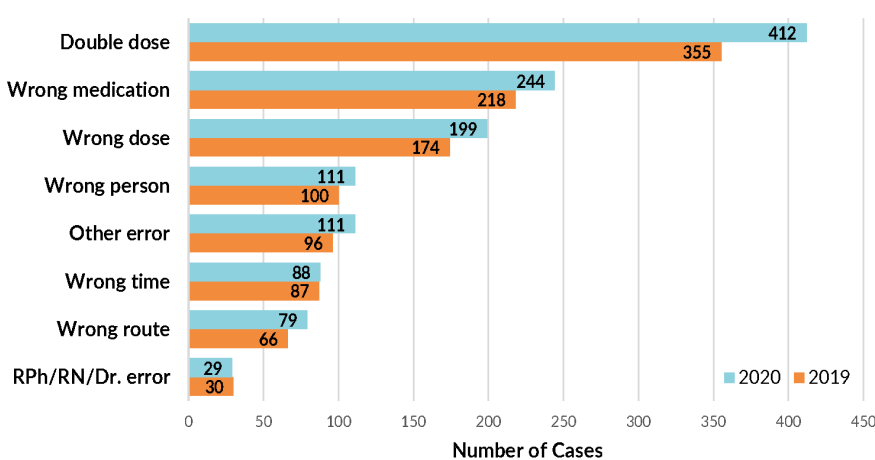


42% of exposures in adults ≥60 years were due to medication errors. Adults ≥60 years accounted for 28% of all medication errors reported, despite representing only 10% of total cases.

Top 5 Substances in Adults ≥60 years (for all exposure reasons)

2019	2020
Beta Blocker, alone	Beta Blocker, alone
Calcium antagonist, alone	Antihyperlipidemic, alone
Antihyperlipidemic, alone	Calcium antagonist, alone
ACE inhibitor, alone	ACE inhibitor, alone
Acetaminophen: adult formulation	Antibiotic: Systemic (PO, IV, IM) Preparation

Type of Medication Error in Adults ≥60 years



Since January 1, 2020, 92% of adults ≥60 years who called the poison center first were managed at home by WAPC specialists. Keeping these patients out of the emergency department saved over 2 million patient dollars.

Cases of accidental misuse increased 35% in adults ≥60 years from 2019 to 2020. The top substances accidentally misused were household bleach, hydrogen peroxide, and other disinfectants.

Public Health Education Events related to Older Adults in 2020

Topic	In Person Events	Online Events
Medication management	1	3
Medication management for caregivers	-	1
Cannabis considerations for older adults	1	3
COVID-19 Poison Prevention	n/a	4
Other education (not specific to older adults)	24	14

Disclaimer: Reporting of exposures to the Washington Poison Center is voluntary and not mandated by law. As such, these data reflect only the exposures reported to the Washington Poison Center, and are most likely an underrepresentation of the true occurrence of any one substance.

