

Contact the Washington Poison Center 24/7/365 at 1 (800) 222-1222

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## WA Poison Center warns of rapid increases in misuse of Ivermectin

The Washington Poison Center is warning healthcare providers of increasing misuse and illness associated with the drug ivermectin. These trends reflect growing public and prescriber interest in ivermectin as a medication to treat or prevent COVID-19—despite the lack of sufficient data and FDA-approval or authorization for these indications. When used inappropriately and/or in non-prescription formulations, ivermectin can lead to adverse effects and hospitalization.

From January 1 to August 30, 2021, the Washington Poison Center received 31 calls regarding ivermectin—more than triple the number received in all of 2020 (9 calls). The largest number of calls occurred in August, with 13 concerning exposure to and 5 requesting information about ivermectin.

### IVERMECTIN

Ivermectin is FDA-approved in tablet form to treat parasitic worms (intestinal strongyloidiasis and onchocerciasis) and in topical formulations to treat head lice and rosacea. Different formulations are also used to treat external and internal parasites in animals. When used under medical supervision, in appropriate doses, and for approved conditions, ivermectin is generally well tolerated.

To date, clinical trials and observational studies evaluating the effectiveness of ivermectin in preventing and treating COVID-19 have not yielded sufficient evidence to warrant FDA approval or for the NIH COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines Panel to recommend its use. There are additional NIH trials currently underway.

### CONCERNS

- Accessing oral and topical ivermectin requires a prescription by a healthcare provider. Some individuals are seeking other means to access this drug, including ingesting products intended for animals. Veterinary formulations of ivermectin can be highly concentrated, thereby placing a human at risk of overdose.
- Poison Centers have also seen increases in misuse of ivermectin prescriptions, such as:
  - Ingesting topical formulations
  - Ingesting a higher dose than recommended
- In addition to toxicity, ivermectin may increase the sedating effects of other medications that cause central nervous system depression, including benzodiazepines and barbiturates.

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs of ivermectin toxicity include gastrointestinal symptoms, hypotension, and/or neurologic effects (decreased consciousness, confusion, hallucinations, seizures, coma). In severe cases, ivermectin overdose can be fatal.

### TREATMENT

For immediate assistance, call the Washington Poison Center (**1-800-222-1222**) to consult with our poison information specialists on treatment recommendations.

### SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advise patients to seek immediate medical treatment if they experience symptoms of ivermectin toxicity.
- Educate patients about the risks of misusing ivermectin prescriptions and veterinary formulations.
- Educate patients on approved COVID-19 prevention measures, such as getting vaccinated, wearing masks, practicing physical distancing, appropriately sanitizing, etc.
- Encourage patients to contact the Washington Poison Center with any questions or concerns about safely using medications, drugs, and other substances.