

# PRESS RELEASE

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

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## Washington Poison Center releases data on increased poison exposures during COVID-19

**Seattle, WA** – In a new data Dashboard ([linked here](#)), the Washington Poison Center (WAPC) reports increased poison exposures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Dashboard specifically documents increases in exposures to household cleaning and disinfectant products, bleach, rubbing alcohol, and hand sanitizer—many of which may be attributed to COVID-19 transmission concerns and precautions.

The new Dashboard compares WAPC telephone helpline data from the first 118 days of 2019 to the same time period in 2020. In 2020:

- Hand sanitizer exposures in children ages 0-12 years increased 52%.
- Exposures from misuse of household cleaning products, bleach, and rubbing alcohol increased 53%.
- Total suspected suicide cases (from all substances) increased 10%.
- 87% of patients exposed to hand sanitizer, household cleaning products, bleach, and rubbing alcohol were managed at home by the WAPC’s staff of healthcare professionals. Keeping patients out of the emergency department saved a total of \$2,689,500 patient dollars.

“We appreciate the confidence that the public and healthcare providers place in us by calling when potentially toxic exposures and overdoses occur,” says Dr. Erica Liebelt, Executive and Medical Director of the WAPC. “By calling us, we are able to compile data, analyze trends, and provide relevant, timely education to communities and public health partners on emerging risks and prevention strategies.”

To prevent poisoning when cleaning or sanitizing:

- Wear gloves when cleaning, and open windows and doors for ventilation.
- Do not mix cleaning products, as mixing can create hazardous gases.
- Do not use cleaning products on food.
- Store cleaners, household chemicals, hand sanitizer, and other potentially harmful substances in their original containers, up high and out of reach of children.
- Supervise children when using hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion and eye exposures.
- Wash masks with soap and water. Never soak or spray masks with bleach, disinfectants, or other cleaning chemicals.
- If you or your loved ones are feeling stressed, anxious, depressed, or fearful, ask for help. Extensive resources are available on the [Washington State Coronavirus Response website](#).
- Call the Poison Helpline (1-800-222-1222) for help with any questions or poison emergencies.

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The Washington Poison Center has assisted Washingtonians for over 60 years. Our toll-free Poison Helpline (1-800-222-1222) is available 24/7/365, and is staffed by nurses and pharmacists with expert-level training in toxicology. The Poison Helpline provides free, confidential, and immediate information and treatment advice on poisonings, drug overdoses, and toxic exposures.