



Virginia Poison Center

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Annual Report

As a nationally certified regional poison center, the Virginia Poison Center's (VPC) mission is to prevent accidental poisonings through public education programs, provide optimal cost-effective care to patients with toxic exposures, and facilitate clinical toxicology education to physicians and other healthcare providers.

⚠️ The worker who's been splashed with a caustic floor stripper

⚠️ The confused senior who's just doubled up on their morning medication

⚠️ The frightened parent of a toddler found chewing on a fistful of leaves from a houseplant

⚠️ The depressed teen who's taken an entire bottle of pills in an attempt to self-harm

Each has been exposed to a potential poison. Each needs help...fast! But, only one requires care in an emergency department. Do you know which one? The experts at the Virginia Poison Center do. They help numerous callers every day with life-saving advice that allows most to avoid expensive, unnecessary medical treatments.

Poison Centers Reduce Healthcare Costs

How does a toll-free emergency hotline staffed by nurses 24 hours daily save healthcare dollars? Simply put, poison center expertise saves lives and dollars by quickly determining the best care for each case, and then guiding treatment so that each patient gets exactly what is needed: nothing more, nothing less.

By avoiding the expense and risks of unnecessary medical treatments, the VPC saves millions of healthcare dollars every year. When contacted from the site of exposure, approximately **90%** of cases are safely managed over the telephone without the need for ambulance transport or emergency room visit.



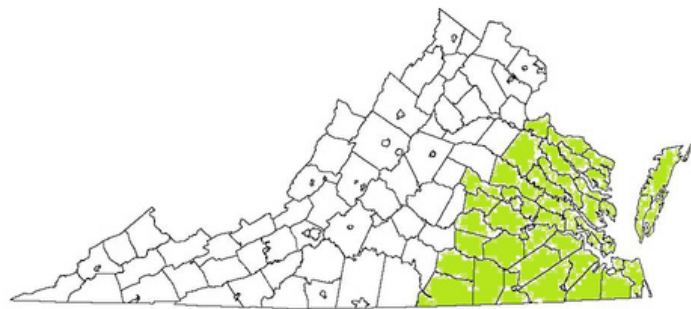
Every day, our staff also assist doctors and other healthcare professionals who consult the VPC for expert advice on how to care for patients who have been exposed to a poison. Research has shown that consultation with a poison center can significantly shorten the patient's length of stay in a hospital, resulting in lower costs.

Finally, several studies have examined the cost-effectiveness of poison center services and found that every dollar spent on poison centers produces a cost savings of \$7 to \$36.

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Our Service Region

The Virginia Department of Health has designated the geographic regions served by each of the state's poison centers. The VPC currently provides services to 35 counties and 16 independent cities. This region is home to more than 3.37 million citizens who depend on our expertise every day of the year.



Caller's City or County

In 2023, the VPC received calls from nearly every county in Virginia. Although most came from within our designated service region, there were more than 6,000 calls from other locations throughout the state and from outside Virginia.

County/City - All Call Types

29,530 calls in 2023

Accomack	224	Essex	140	Isle of Wight	200	New Kent	172	Prince George	178	York	243
Amelia	34	Franklin	53	James City	66	Newport News City	1,533	Richmond	39		
Brunswick	19	Franklin City	58	King and Queen	45	Norfolk City	2,015	Richmond City	2,423		
Caroline	125	Gloucester	323	King George	66	Northampton	65	Southampton	102		
Charles City	19	Goochland	215	King William	129	Northumberland	52	Suffolk City	758		
Chesapeake City	1,558	Greensville	89	Lancaster	73	Nottoway	37	Surry	31		
Chesterfield	2,652	Hampton City	1,005	Lunenburg	24	Petersburg City	442	Sussex	56		
Colonial Heights City	181	Hanover	979	Mathews	78	Poquoson City	56	Virginia Beach City	2,809		
Dinwiddie	94	Henrico	2,056	Mecklenburg	152	Portsmouth City	740	Westmoreland	79		
Emporia City	2	Hopewell City	258	Middlesex	49	Powhatan	76	Williamsburg City	220		

Annual Call Volume Changing

Incoming calls to the Virginia Poison Center are changing in complexity: fewer calls from homes involving unintentional pediatric exposures, and more calls from health care facilities managing sick, complex patients.

In 2023, incoming call volume included:

- **27,446** humans who were exposed to a potential poison
- **481** animals who were exposed to a potential poison
- **1,524** calls for information only, no one was exposed to a poison

In addition to fast response to their initial call, each caller receives individual attention from a specialist until his or her case is completely resolved. To provide this individualized treatment advice and careful monitoring, the VPC staff placed more than 40,600 follow-up calls in 2023.

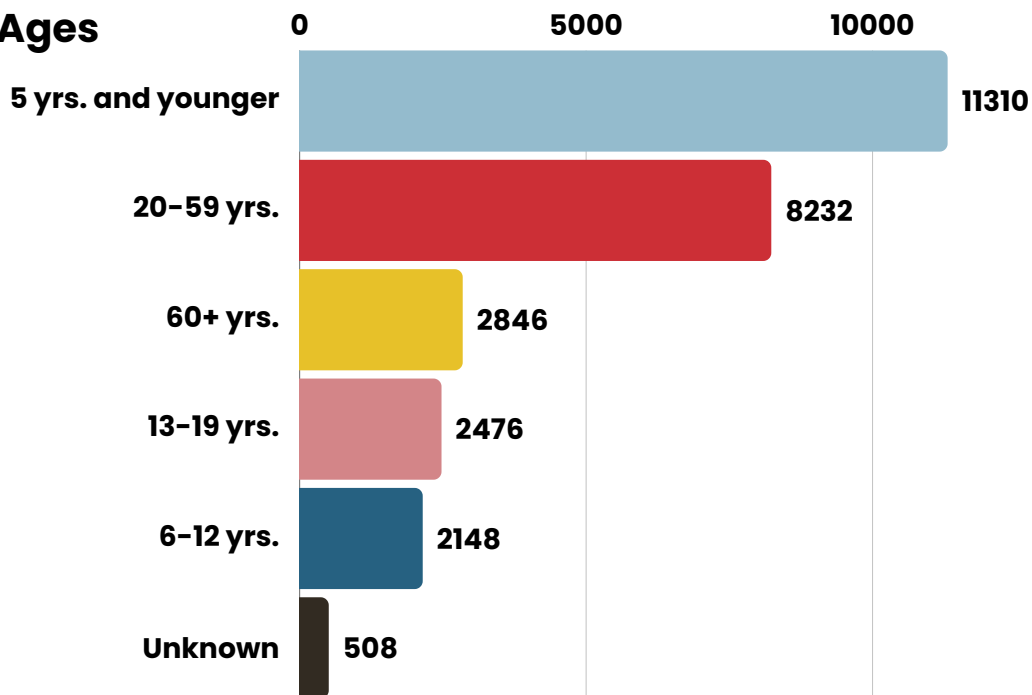
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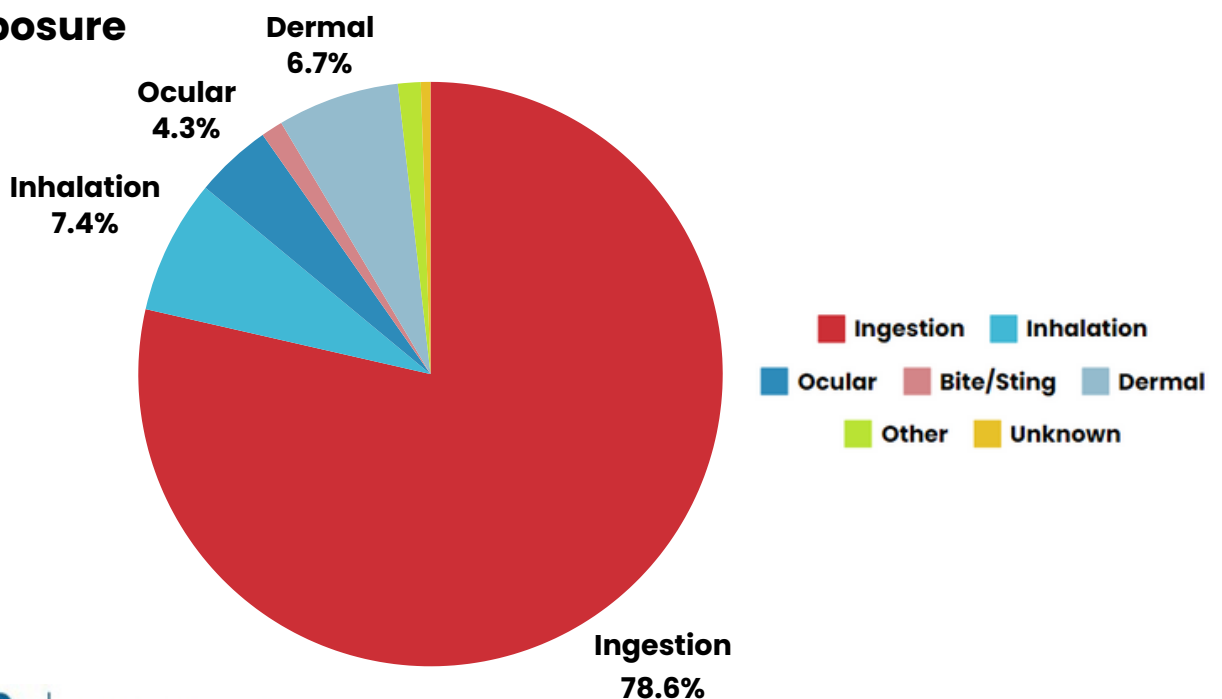
Reason for Poison Exposure

In 2023, **78%** of reported poisonings were *unintentional*, or accidental exposures. Examples of these include most childhood poisonings, as well as bite/stings, occupational exposures, environmental exposures and mistakes with medicines or other products. **Eighteen percent** of exposures were *intentional* such as a suicide gesture or deliberately misusing a medicine or chemical product. Another common reason to call the VPC is for assistance with an adverse reaction to medicine, food or other product that has been used in the correct way but is associated with a negative health effect: these cases accounted for about **3%** of all exposures.

Patient Ages



Route of Exposure



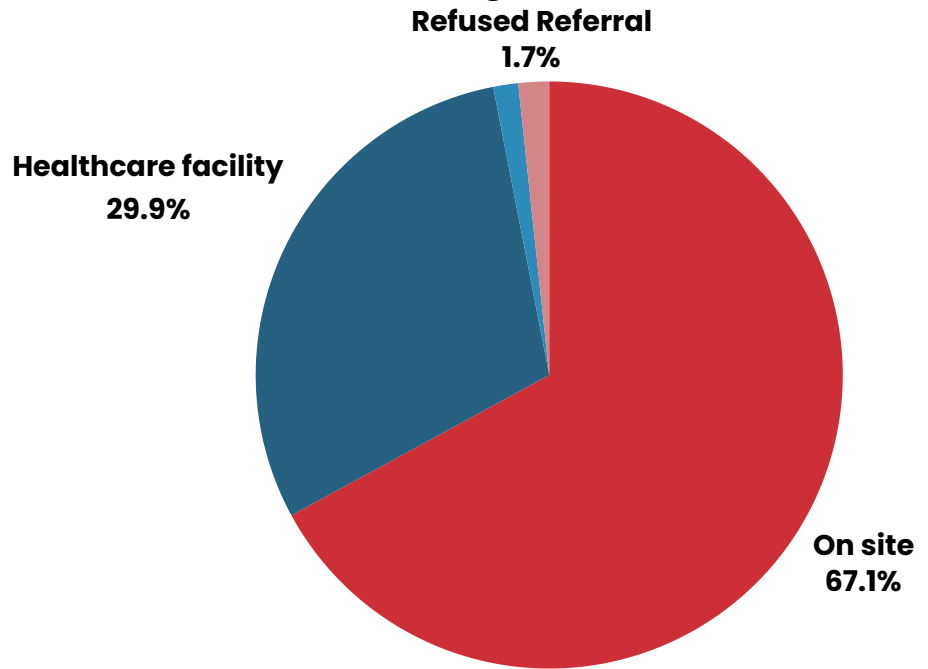
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Where do our patients receive treatment?

One of the poison center's most important roles is to quickly advise whether a poison exposure is serious enough to require treatment at a health care facility. Fortunately, with poison center advice, most patients can be safely managed without referral to a doctor or emergency department. This saves individuals, families and the Commonwealth millions of dollars every year by preventing the costs of unnecessary medical treatment. Studies have shown that when no poison center is available, many patients will simply dial 911 and incur the expense of both EMS transport and emergency department care for a poisoning that could have been safely treated without going to a hospital.



2023 Management Site



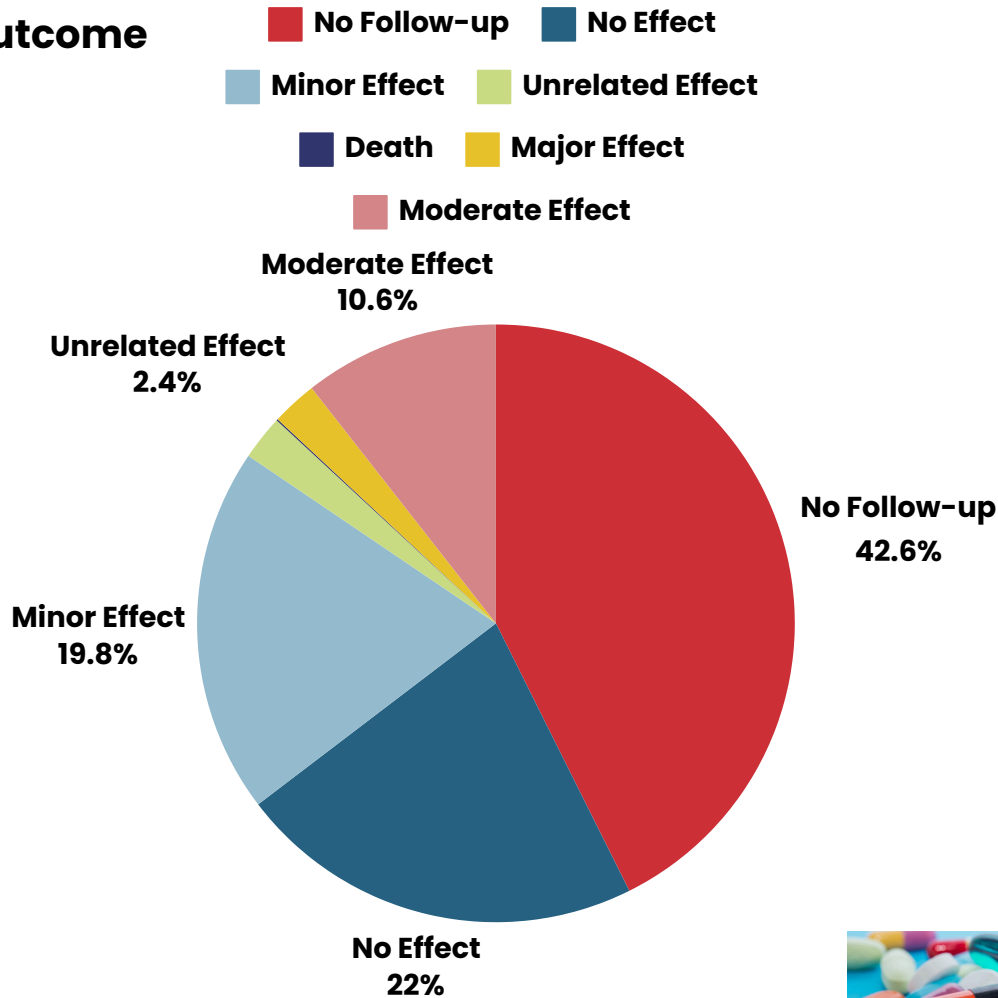
Types of Poisons: Pharmaceutical & Non-Pharmaceutical

Pharmaceuticals		Non-Pharmaceuticals	
Analgesics	3,690	Cleaning substances (household)	2,488
Antidepressants	1,946	Cosmetic/personal care products	1,857
Antihistamines	1,774	Foreign bodies/toys/miscellaneous	1,388
Cardiovascular drugs	1,758	Alcohols	1,013
Sedative/hypnotics/antipsychotics	1,366	Pesticides	999
Stimulants & street drugs	1,125	Plants	698

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Medical Outcome



Fatal Poisonings

In Virginia, poisonings currently cause more deaths than any injury other than motor vehicle crashes. However, the vast majority of these fatal exposures are not reported to a poison center. More complete data describing the actual number of deaths from poisoning is obtained from hospital records and medical examiner reports.

In 2023, the VPC was consulted on 20 cases which resulted in a fatality. Young children are involved in about half of all cases reported to poison centers; however, deaths from poisoning are rare in this age group.

Medications or drugs involved in adult deaths included prescription medications, over-the-counter medications and street drugs such as cocaine.



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Outreach : Poison Prevention Programs

Most calls to the Virginia Poison Center are for advice about an unintentional poisoning. The vast majority of these exposures could have been avoided, so the VPC strives to make the public aware of how they can prevent serious injury from poisons. The center responds to request from schools, civic groups, employers, child care centers, and state and local agencies, and provides a variety of programs on poison prevention. Every year, the VPC is represented at dozens of community events such as health fairs, where our displays, magnets, and printed materials reach thousands of attendees with information on poison safety. During 2023, the VPC participated in 47 of these educational events, from a senior support seminar in Chesapeake to a Lock & Talk event in Alberta. These events were attended by more than 3,500 people. The VPC Toxicologist provided a place for almost 120 medical students, pharmacy students, residents and interns to learn more about toxicology and the workings of a poison center.

To provide information about the causes, treatment and prevention of poisoning, more than 110,000 pieces of material were distributed throughout our service area.

Save our number and **follow us on social media** by scanning the QR code with your phone. Also, visit our **website** at **poison.vcu.edu**



Virginia Poison Center Staff

Director	S. Rutherford Rose, PharmD, FAACT
Medical Director	Kirk Cumpston, DO, FAAEM
Fellowship Director	Brandon Wills, DO, MS
Education Specialist	Shelly Clary, MA
Secretary	Beverly Trout
Toxicologists	Michelle Troendle, MD Emily Kershner, MD



Nursing Staff : Specialist in Poison Information

Michele Burt, RN, MS, CSPI	Kathleen McGann, RN, CSPI
Michell Catron, RN, CSPI	Tammy Scott, RN, CSPI
Virginia Cheatham, RN, CSPI	Jessica Simon, RN, CSPI
Alina Chekalina, RN	Beth Sturm, RN, CSPI
Sherri Ellis, RN, CSPI	Beth Szulczewski, RN, CSPI
Danielle Gresham, RN	Michelle Crumpler, RN, CSPI
Steven Yoder, RN, CSPI	Kristen Isom, RN
Andrew Rozsa, RN	Jane Emerson, RN

Specialist in poison information are the individuals who staff the center's emergency phone lines 24 hours daily. These are experienced registered nurses who have received additional training in the evaluation and treatment of toxic exposures. They have earned the CSPI designation by successfully passing a national board certification examination in this clinical specialty.

2023



VCUHealth™

Virginia Poison Center

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