

Annual Report 2023



The National Poisons Information Centre

Healthcare professional line:
01 837 9964 / 809 2566 (24 hr)

Public poisons line:
01 809 2166 (8 am -10 pm)

Website: www.poisons.ie

Email: npicdublin@beaumont.ie

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A snapshot of NPIC activity

In 2023, NPIC received a total of 10,805 enquiries.



97.7% of enquiries related to human poisoning



0.48% of enquiries concerned poisoning in animals



3% of enquiries related to plants and mushrooms



1.7% of enquiries were for non-emergency information



The busiest times of the day were from 4pm to 10pm



The busiest month in 2023 was May

Source of enquiries to the NPIC



52.8% of enquiries were from members of the public



43.8% of enquiries were from healthcare professionals



3.4% of enquiries came from other sources

Poisoning circumstances

61.5% of enquiries related to accidental poisonings

20.9% of enquiries were due to medication errors

12.3% of enquiries were for intentional poisonings

5.3% of enquiries related to other circumstances

Social Media



- 1,350+ followers
- 1,362 posts
- 500,000 X impressions



- 7,000+ followers
- Overall Instagram reach of 64,060



- 32k+ Likes
- Overall Facebook reach of 1,000,478

Foreword

Welcome to the 2023 Annual Report for the National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) of Ireland.

The Annual Report is based on data collected on enquiries to the NPIC from members of the public, healthcare professionals and others. Overall, there were 10,805 enquiries to the NPIC in 2023, a small increase compared to 2022.



2023 was a busy and exciting year for the NPIC and the highlight without doubt, was hosting the NPIC Show Garden at the Bord Bia Bloom Festival in the Phoenix Park in Dublin. The garden was called the ‘Know, Act, Prevent Garden’ and it emphasised the need for poison prevention actions to keep children and adults safe. Our garden contained a rich variety of beautiful plants that were all low in toxicity and also featured a kitchen and shed where chemicals were stored safely out of reach of children. Paving stones engraved with the words “Safe Home, Safe Garden” reinforced the take home safety messages.

The ‘Know, Act, Prevent Garden’ was designed by Declan McKenna of Silverstream Landscapes in Monaghan and it received a Silver Medal Award, that we were thrilled with. Our partners for this project were the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the Health Services Executive (HSE). Collaboration on the project started in March 2023 and a steering group of seven people helped develop the theme and design of the garden. The NPIC staff worked hard to develop the garden design elements, incorporate finishing touches for the garden, as well as managing staffing logistics, liaising with our partners (the HSE and HSA), collaborators and invited guests, undertaking media training, writing website blogs, and generating social media messages.

We had an exciting media day launch at the garden on 31st May which was a hive of activity. Interviews were lined up, videos were recorded, and lots of photographs taken. We are very grateful to the children and parents who attended the launch and were our guest models



for the day. The children did a super job. The Bord Bia Bloom Festival officially opened its doors to the public from 1st to 5th June and over 10,000 visitors attended the event. The weather was glorious and this added to the high spirits, energy, enjoyment of the event, and our interactions with the public. We are indebted to staff from the HSA, HSE and Beaumont Hospital who kindly volunteered their time to man the garden. Each day we had special guests with specific expertise who interacted with the public. Sincere thanks to Dr Rasha Sawaya (consultant paediatric emergency physician), Dr Fatima Al Abadi (registrar in paediatric emergency medicine), Dr Abigail Collins (consultant paediatrician), Eanna Ni Lamhna (environmentalist and radio presenter), Louisa Power (medication safety pharmacist), Dr Kieran Connolly (mycologist and botanist), Professor Tom Harrington (mycologist and botanist) and Trish Duggan (paediatric nurse) for their time and willingness to help.

We are grateful to An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister for Social Protection, Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphries and Minister for Higher Education, Simon Harris, for visiting the garden and speaking with staff. We were thrilled to welcome such high profile politicians to the garden and let them know about our work.



After five days of this successful public outreach activity, we were tired and a little hoarse from speaking with so many visitors, but we were extremely proud of what we achieved, particularly as we are such a small unit. We achieved our goal of raising awareness through a series of radio interviews and print and online print articles and across our social media platforms. Sincere thanks to the Senior Executive at Beaumont Hospital for supporting this activity and special thanks to all the NPIC staff for their dedication and commitment to this ambitious project.

When Bloom came to an end, the plants from the show garden were donated to Beaumont Hospital and are now planted at the front entrance to the hospital. Thanks to Maureen Doyle, Beaumont Hospital Head-Gardener, and her colleague Mark Barry for their hard work preparing the soil and re-homing the plants that continue to thrive. A special plaque engraved with the message below was installed.



Low Toxicity Garden
The National Poisons Information Centre
Beaumont Hospital
Silver Medal
Bord Bia Bloom Festival 2023
www.poisons.ie

In September, we had the pleasure of welcoming the Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Hildegard Naughton to the NPIC. We were delighted to share our experience of managing poisoning enquiries relating to drugs of abuse and to discuss our role in the Emerging Trends Group.

I hope you will enjoy reading more about our work and poisoning statistics in the 2023 Annual Report.

Thank you to everyone who uses our service and supports the work of the NPIC.

Dr Edel Duggan

Clinical Director

National Poisons Information Centre

The NPIC team

The NPIC staff comprises of a Clinical Director, six Specialists in Poisons Information (SPIs) and an Administrative Officer. The NPIC's phone lines are answered by the SPIs who are scientists with additional training and postgraduate qualifications in medical toxicology.

The NPIC staff consults with NPIC Clinical Director for advice and medical information on the management of severe and complex poisoning cases as required.



Clinical Director

Dr Edel Duggan MB, BCh, BAO, MD, FFARCSI, Dip Med Tox

Manager

Patricia Casey BSc, Dip Med Tox, FEAPCCT

Specialists in Poisons Information

Nicola Cassidy BSc, M Med Sc, Dip Med Tox

Niamh English MSc, Dip Med Tox

John Herbert BSc, Dip Med Tox

Conor Hurley BSc, MSc, Dip Med Tox

Feargal O'Connor BSc, Cert Med Tox

Administrative Officer

Sinead Doyle BSc

The role of the NPIC

The National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) was established in 1966 to provide telephone advice to healthcare professionals treating poisoned patients. Today the NPIC operates 365 days a year and provides a specialist telephone information service to assist healthcare professionals in the treatment of acute poisoning.

The NPIC Healthcare Professional Line is available 24-hours every day of the year for medical staff and other healthcare professionals.

The NPIC telephone numbers are;

- 01 809 2566 / 01 809 2568
- 01 837 9964 / 01 837 9966

The NPIC also has a dedicated number for members of the public that operates between 8am and 10pm every day. The telephone number for the Public Poisons Information Line is 01 809 2166. NPIC staff provide advice to members of the public on whether they need to seek medical attention following an accidental poisoning incident or if they can be safely monitored at home. It is our policy to refer all cases of intentional poisoning for medical assessment.

The secondary role of the NPIC is to collect and interpret epidemiological data on acute poisoning. This information is used to monitor poisoning trends and establish and update appropriate treatment protocols as required.

NPIC staff members answer enquiries between 8am and 10pm every day. The UK National Poisons Information Service is contracted to answer enquiries to the NPIC outside of these core hours. Telephone calls are automatically diverted to the UK Poisons Information Service between 10pm and 8am every day and the extra call charges are paid by Beaumont Hospital.

Quality and training

All enquiry records are peer-reviewed and stored as hardcopy and electronically on a Poisons Information Database named UKPID. All incoming and outgoing telephone enquiries to the NPIC are audio-recorded for clinical governance and to assist with staff training. The Clinical Director conducts periodic audits to ensure the quality of the service and advice provided.

The NPIC maintains close links with the UK National Poisons Information Service and regularly contributes to and organises Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities with our colleagues. NPIC staff members regularly submit research studies to the annual congress of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT).

Key statistics for 2023

Time and date of enquiry

The National Poisons Information Centre received a total of 10,805 enquiries in 2023. 8,756 enquires were answered between 8am and 10pm while 2,049 enquiries were received between 10pm and 8am and were answered by the UK National Poisons Information Service. The busiest hours of the day were from 4pm to 10pm (Figure 1). May was the busiest month. The average number of enquiries per month was 857 (Figure 2).

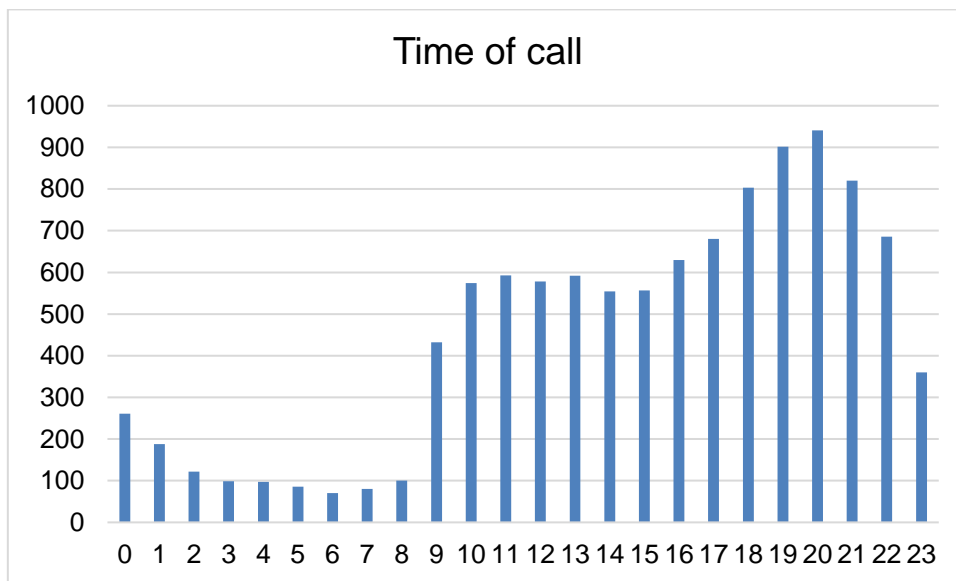


Figure 1: Time of enquiry to NPIC in 2023

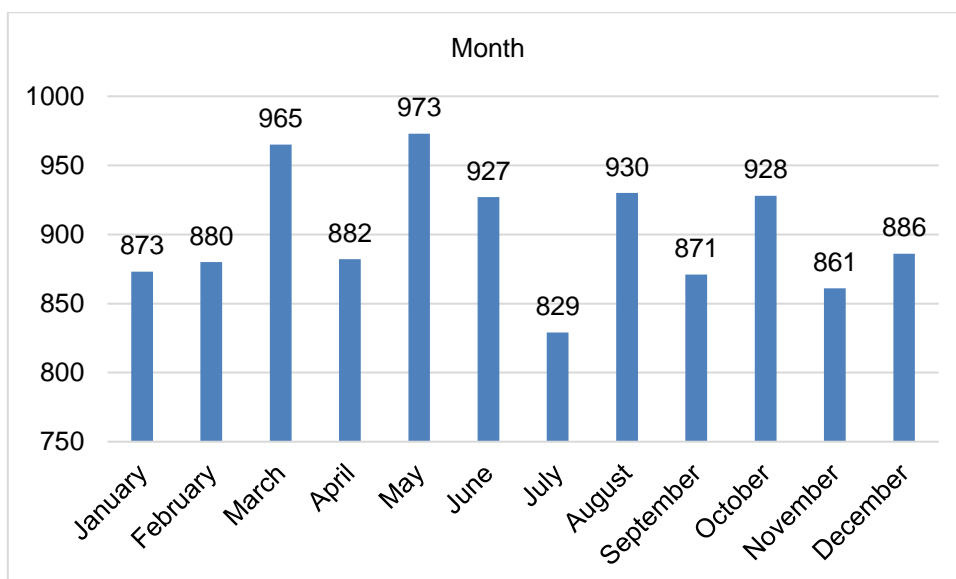


Figure 2: Monthly enquiries to NPIC in 2023

Type of caller

The NPIC is contacted by different types of healthcare professionals, as well as members of the public and support services. In 2023, calls from members of the public accounted for the majority of enquiries (52.8%) to the NPIC.

Enquirer	n	%
Member of the public	5701	52.8%
GP/Primary care	2174	20.1%
Hospital	2303	21.3%
Community pharmacy	168	1.55%
Nursing home	136	1.26%
Ambulance service	121	1.1%
School/childcare	63	0.6%
Support services	22	0.2%
Dental establishment	38	0.35%
Veterinary practice	14	0.13%
Other	65	0.61%

Table 1: Type of caller

Enquiries from healthcare professionals

Approximately 41.4% of enquiries were received from healthcare professionals working in hospitals (n=2,303) or general practice (n=2,174). GP out-of-hours services that operate between 6 pm-8 am (weekdays) and 24 hr (weekends) accounted for 1,579 enquiries.

CareDoc	581	DDoc	108	KDoc	29
SouthDoc	245	ShannonDoc	190	EastDoc	5
WestDoc	140	NowDoc	123		
MidDoc	92	NEDoc	66		

Table 2: Enquiries from GP out-of-hours services

Enquiries from members of the public

The NPIC operates a public access telephone line every day from 8am to 10pm to give advice to members of the public. The NPIC relies on social media, referrals from healthcare professionals, search engine results, and on word of mouth to help raise awareness and direct callers to the service.

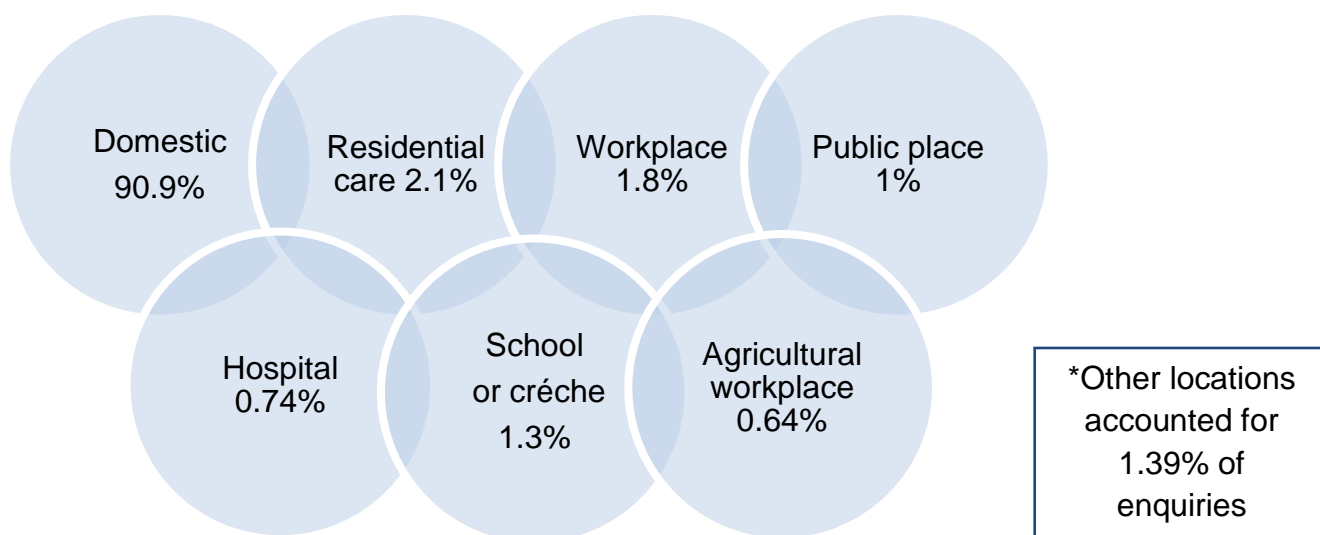
In 2023, the NPIC received 5,701 enquiries from members of the public, representing 52.8% of total enquiries. 4,275 (75%) of enquiries from members of the public involved children aged 16 years or under. The majority of enquiries related to accidental exposures (78%), while 17.4% of enquiries concerned medication errors.

4,366 of cases (76.6%) were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted. 1,080 (18.9%) of cases had minor signs and symptoms. 74 (1.30%) cases had moderate signs and symptoms including repeated vomiting, CNS depression, and cardiac features, and a small number of cases had severe features. The signs and symptoms were unknown for 75 (1.3%) cases and were not applicable (i.e. unrelated to poisoning) for 102 (1.8%) cases.

952 (16.7%) patients did not require medical treatment, 1,329 (23.3%) were referred to a hospital emergency department for treatment, 367 (6.4%) patients were referred to their GP for medical assessment, and 2,453 (43%) patients were advised to seek medical advice if symptoms developed.

Incident location

Most human poisonings occurred in the home or domestic setting (90.9%, n=9,602). A small number of poisonings occurred in nursing home/care home/residential care facilities (n=224), an occupational setting (n=188), a public place (n=114), hospital (n=78), school/crèche (n=133), agricultural workplace (n=68), and other locations (n=153).



Geographic location of callers

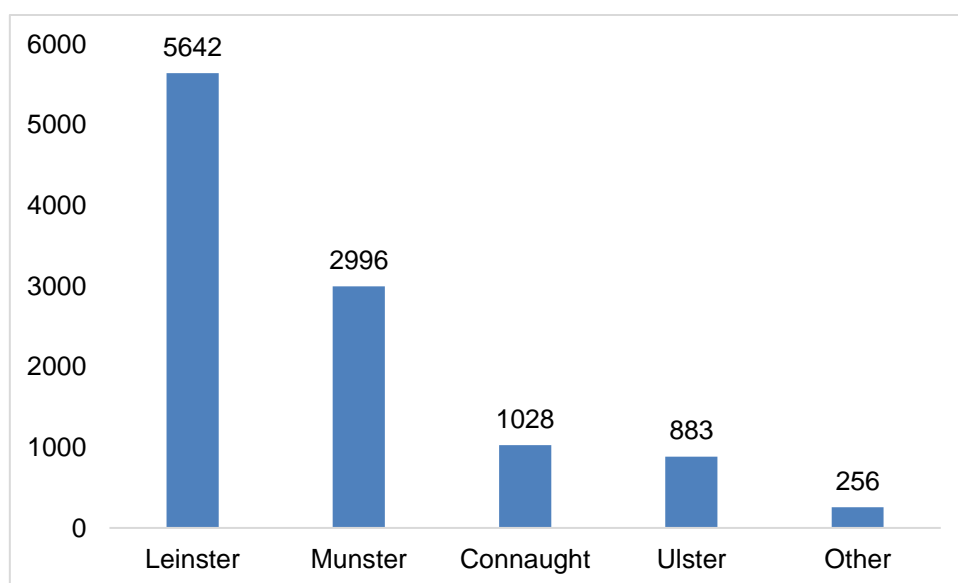
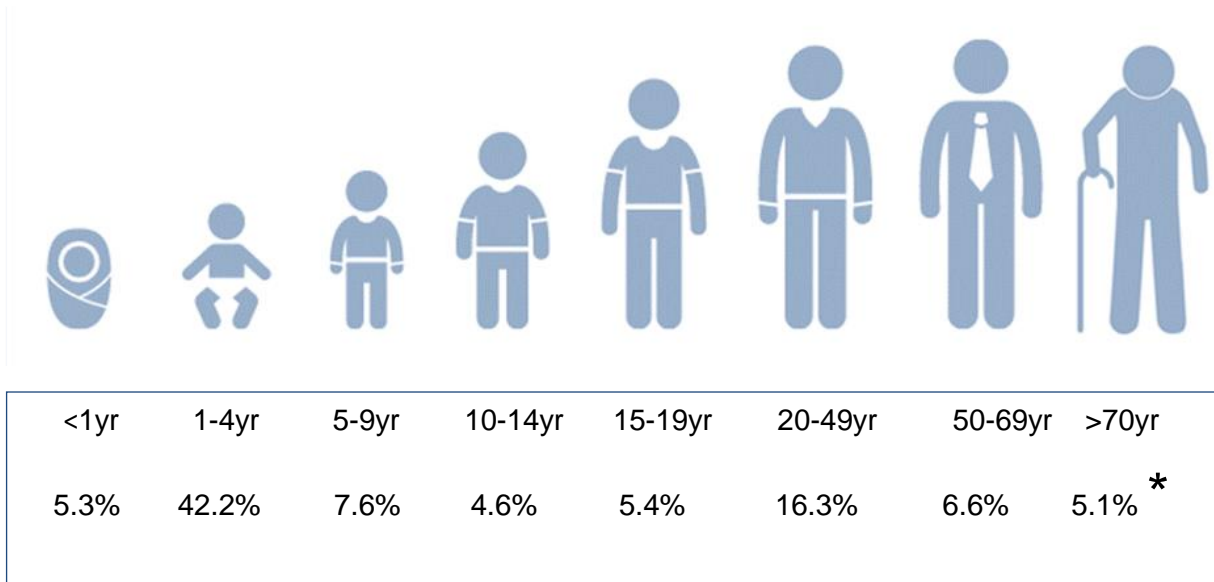


Figure 3: Numbers of poisoning cases according to caller's geographic location

Demographics

10,560 enquiries related to human poisoning cases. The majority of poisoning enquiries related to children aged 14 years and younger 59.7% (n=6,309). The peak age was 1-4 years old (42.2%). 3,535 poisoning enquiries involved individuals aged 15 years or older. The specific age was not recorded for 6.8% (n=721) of cases.



*6.8% age was not recorded

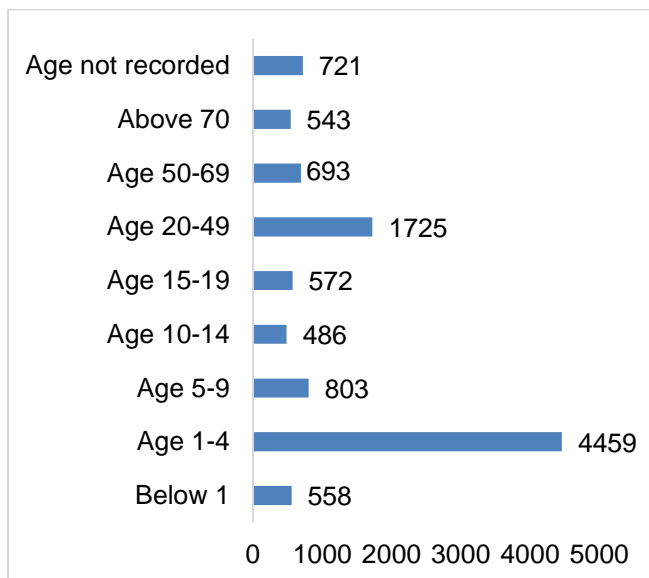


Figure 5: Age groups for poisoning cases

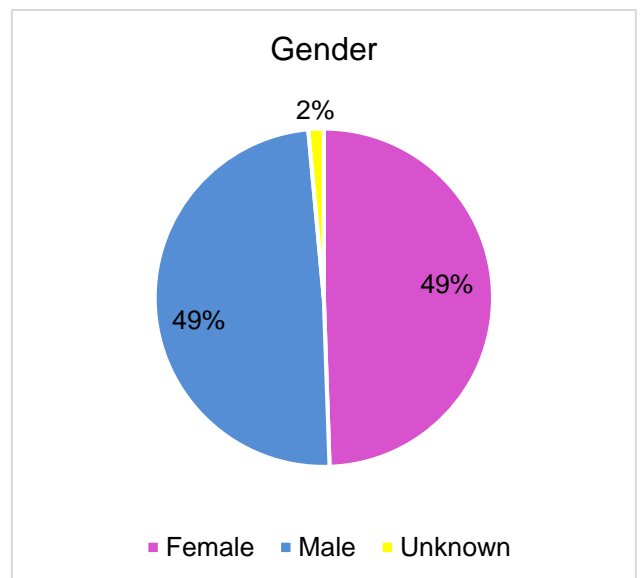


Figure 4: Gender distribution of poisoning cases

Poisoning circumstances

The NPIC received 10,560 enquiries related to poisoning in humans. The majority of enquiries involved accidental/unintentional poisonings (n=6,501). 2,213 enquiries related to therapeutic errors with medications, 1,292 enquiries were intentional overdoses, and 194 enquiries related to recreational abuse. The remaining cases were either adverse reactions, or cases of unknown circumstances or intent.

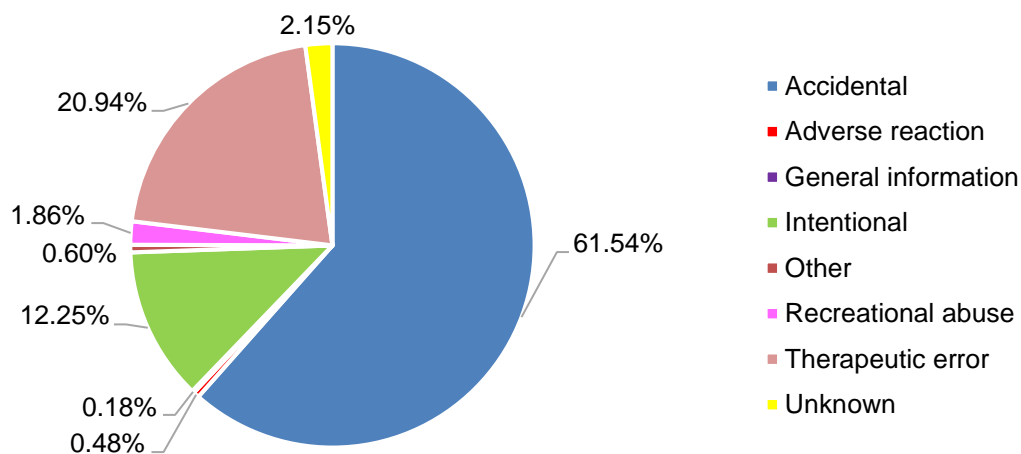


Figure 6: Poisoning circumstances

Agents involved in human poisoning

Over 16,748 agents were involved in cases of human poisoning. Over 56% of all agents were drugs (including medications and drugs of abuse), 18.2% were household products such as fabric detergent products and multipurpose cleaners, and 14.8% were chemicals including alcohols, corrosive substances, essential oils, and hydrocarbons.

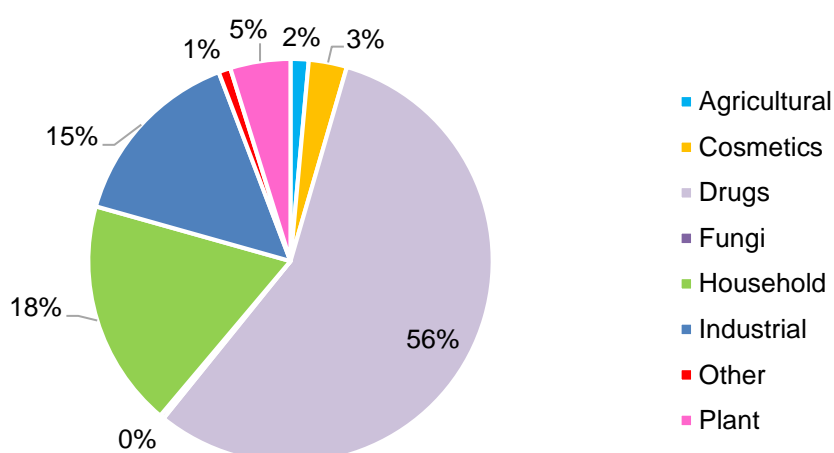


Figure 7: Agents involved in human poisoning

Top 10 Agents

In 2023, paracetamol, ibuprofen and ethanol were the top three agents implicated in poisoning enquiries, similar to the previous years. The top 10 agents involved in poisoning cases and their categories are listed in Figure 8.

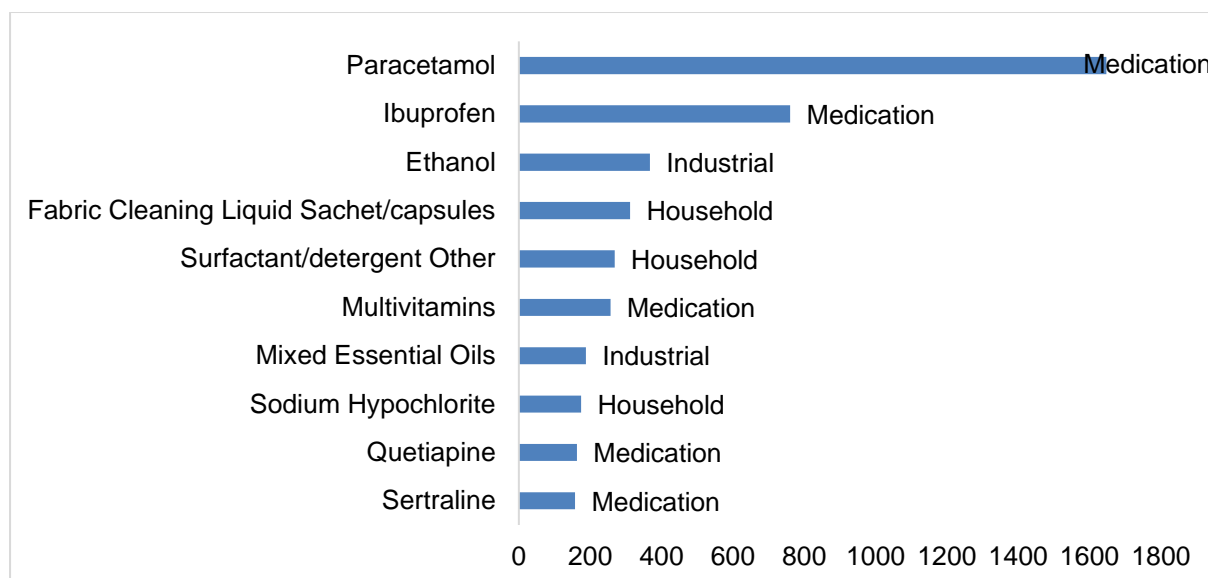


Figure 8: The top 10 agents involved in poisoning

Top 10 Medications

The top 10 medications are listed in Figure 9. Paracetamol was the most common medication consumed. Codeine and caffeine appear in the top medications because these ingredients are present in a number of analgesic products. However, the doses involved are usually small. These ingredients are excluded from Figure 9.

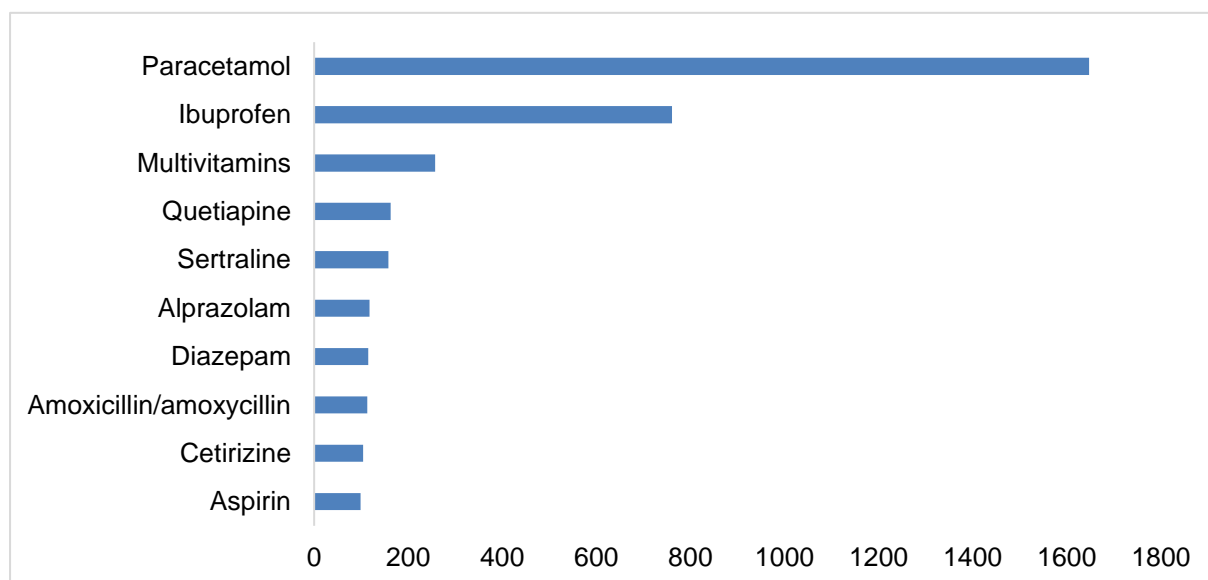


Figure 9: Top 10 medications involved in poisoning.

Household Products

3,051 enquiries to the NPIC in 2023 involved household products. The most common products were fabric cleaning liquid detergent capsules, disinfectants/antiseptics/sanitiser, dishwasher tablets, hand sanitiser, bleach, and reed diffusers. Foreign bodies and toys including coins, magnets, and water beads are common household items that may cause an obstruction if ingested.

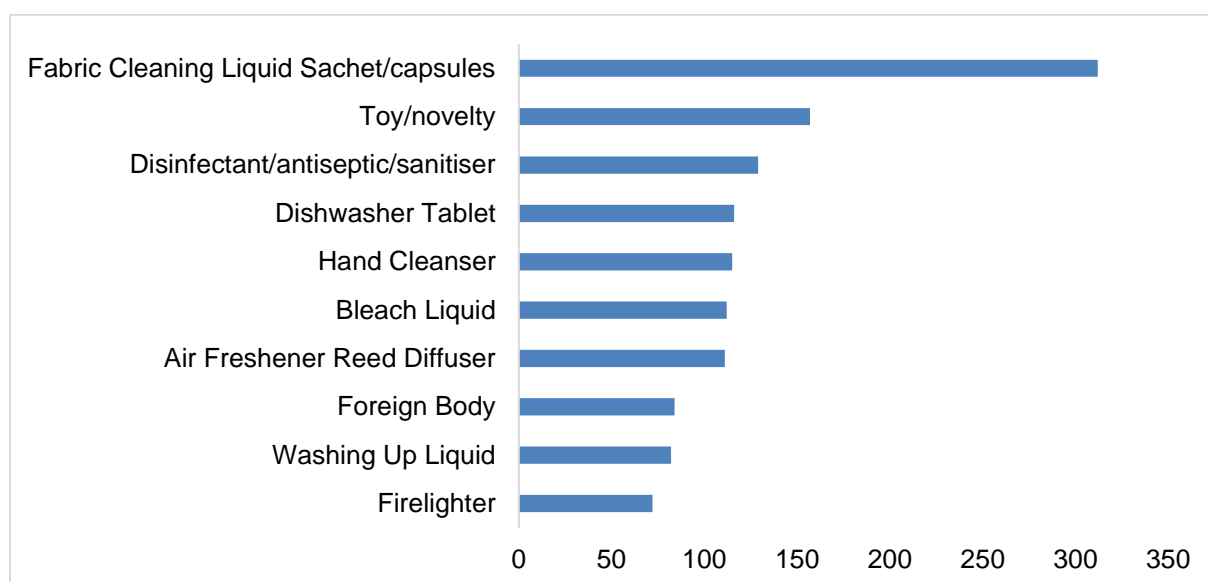


Figure 10: The top household products involved in poisoning.

Agricultural Products

Agricultural agents accounted for 243 (1.45%) poisoning enquiries. Enquiries about exposure to glyphosate-containing weed killers predominated (19.7% of enquiries about agricultural products). 3% of enquiries related to unknown pesticides. Other categories of agricultural products are shown in Figure 11.

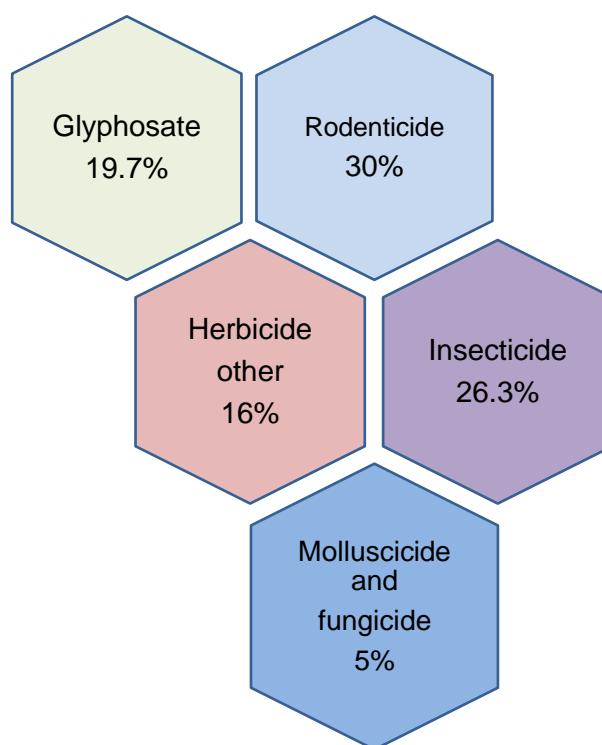


Figure 11: Agricultural products

Drugs of abuse

There were 276 enquiries relating to 11 categories of drugs of abuse. The main drugs of abuse included cocaine, heroin, cannabis/cannabinoids, ecstasy, and amphetamines. Many cases involved more than one drug of abuse.

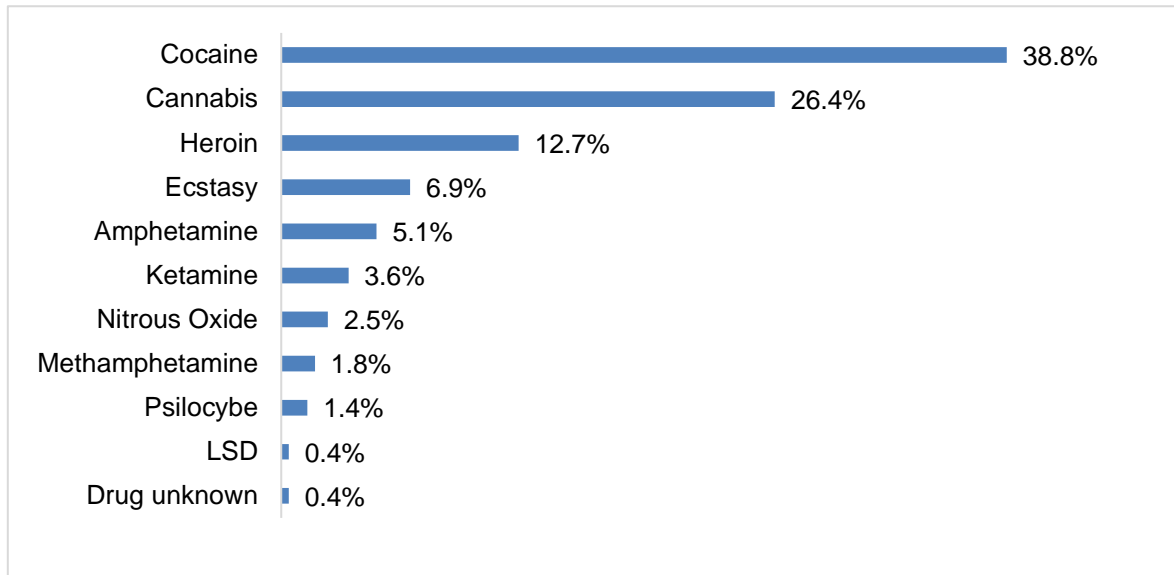


Figure 12: Drugs of abuse

Poisoning in children

In 2023, 6,306 enquiries involved children aged 14 years or under. The majority of these enquiries related to children under 4 years of age (5,017, 70.4%). 81.4% of children were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted. 17% had minor or moderate symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, or a mild local skin reaction. The symptoms were unknown or unrelated in 1.3% of cases. 34 children had severe symptoms and there were no fatalities.



7,245 agents were involved in cases of poisoning in children. Medications were the most common type of agent involved in paediatric poisoning. The top medication enquiries concerned paracetamol, ibuprofen, and multivitamin products, as in previous years.

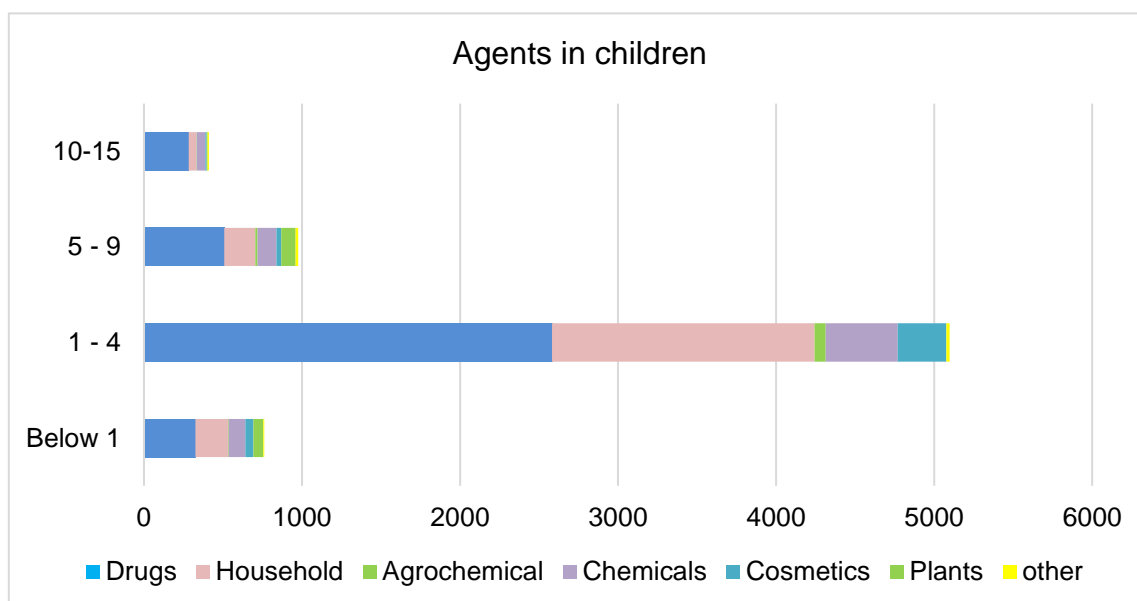


Figure 13: The types of agents involved in paediatric poisoning in 2023

Signs and symptoms at the time of enquiry to NPIC

A Poison Severity Score is assigned to each human case based on the clinical features at the time the NPIC was contacted (n=10,560). Signs and symptoms are classified as minor, moderate, severe, none, not applicable, or unknown. It is possible that some patients could have become symptomatic or their condition deteriorated after the initial contact with the NPIC.

- 67.2% (n=7,092) of patients were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted
- 24.7% (n=2,610) of patients had minor signs and symptoms, for example mild gastrointestinal upset, drowsiness, and mild local irritation of skin, eyes, or mucous membranes
- 4.3% (n=459) of patients had moderate signs and symptoms including repeated vomiting, CNS depression, and some cardiac features
- 1.5% (n=161) of patients had severe signs and symptoms including coma, liver function abnormalities, severe hypotension, and metabolic changes
- The signs and symptoms were unknown for 174 cases (1.7%) and were not applicable i.e. unrelated to poisoning for 64 cases (0.6%)

Clinical outcome of serious / unusual poisoning cases

162 cases were followed-up due to the severity, potential severity, or unusual nature of their symptoms when the NPIC was contacted. NPIC staff subsequently telephoned the hospital and spoke with members of the clinical team to determine the health outcome for the patient.

- 79 patients who were followed up recovered completely
- 42 patients developed short-term sequelae
- A small number of patients (<5) had permanent sequelae or had outcomes that were classified as 'not applicable' (for example, poisoning was eventually excluded as a cause for the patient's clinical condition)
- 10 patients died
- The outcome could not be determined for 24 patients

We are grateful to the nursing and medical staff for their help providing follow-up information to NPIC staff.

Surveillance and research

The NPIC is in a unique position to conduct real time surveillance by monitoring trends in poisoning. For the 2023 Annual Report, we decided to highlight poisoning incidents with plants and mushrooms. In 2023, the NPIC received a total of 342 enquiries relating to plants and mushrooms, representing 3.2% of overall enquiries.

Plant enquiries

Plant enquiries accounted for 2.7% (n=285) of overall enquiries. 69.1% of these cases were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted. 25% of cases had minor signs and symptoms and 3.9% of cases had moderate or severe signs and symptoms including repeated vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal pain, and fever. The symptoms were unknown for 2% of enquiries.

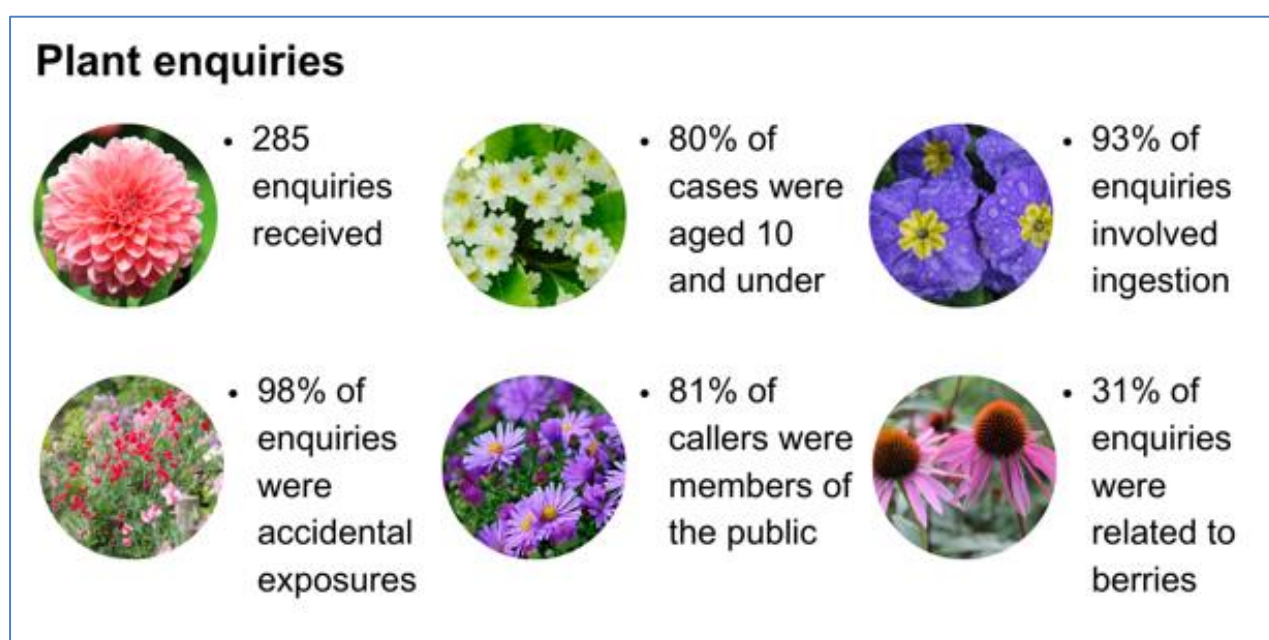


Figure 14: Plant enquiries

Mushroom enquiries

The NPIC received 57 mushroom enquiries, 50% of these cases were asymptomatic when the NPIC was contacted. 36.5% of cases had minor signs and symptoms and 11.5% of cases had moderate or severe signs and symptoms including repeated vomiting, diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal pain, and fever.

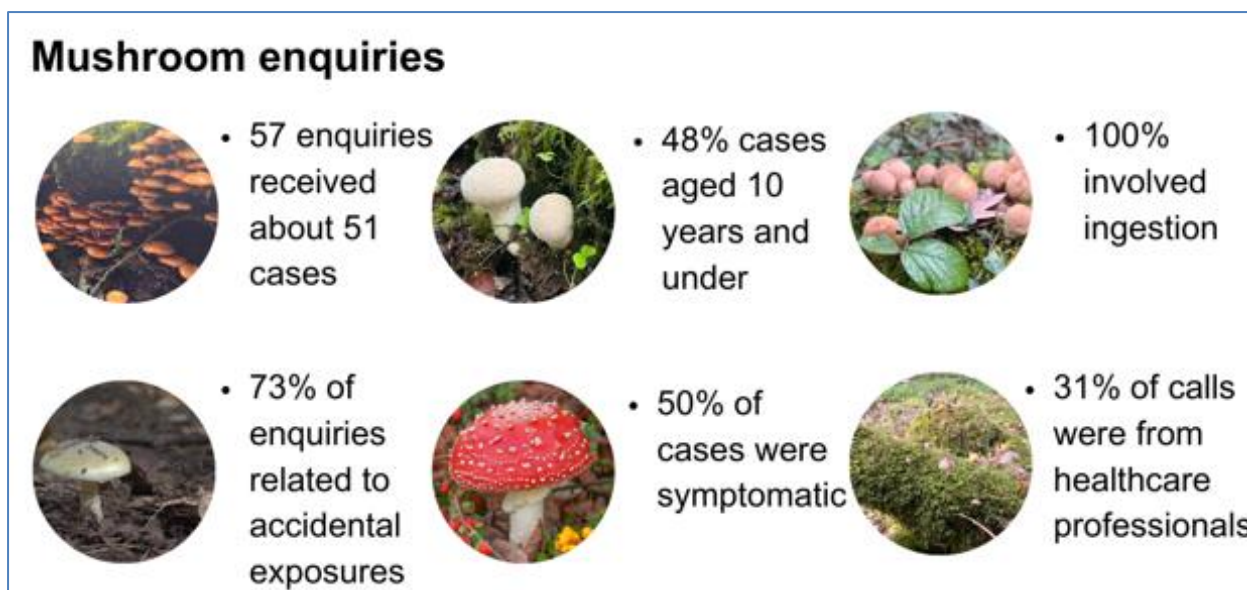


Figure 15: Mushroom enquiries

It is easy to confuse edible and toxic mushroom species and getting a mushroom's identification wrong can have serious health consequences. The NPIC highlighted the importance of being 100% confident when identifying wild mushrooms when foraging, via our social media channels, over the summer and autumn months.

TOXBASE® enquiries

TOXBASE® is the on-line clinical toxicology database of the UK National Poisons Information Service. It is the primary toxicology database used by the NPIC to provide information on the clinical features and management of acute poisoning.

TOXBASE® is used by Emergency Departments and Intensive Care Units in Ireland. In 2023, there were 19,836 TOXBASE user sessions by 46 registered users in Ireland.

NPIC website

The website **www.poisons.ie** has details on

- how to contact the NPIC for members of the public and healthcare professionals
- practical poison prevention advice
- educational resources
- information on seasonal hazards
- information for healthcare professionals
- and regulatory information for industry



The website highlights the telephone number for the Public Poisons Line so that members of the public can find it easily in an emergency. The Industry page provides advice for companies that have to register products under EU Chemical, Labelling and Packaging (CLP) Regulations.

In 2023, the NPIC website had

- 58,010 page views
- There were 20,888 unique first-time visitors and 1,721 return visitors to the website
- 76.0% of users performed an organic search using a search engine to arrive at poisons.ie while 17.3% of users searched for poisons.ie directly. 4.9% of users were referred to poisons.ie via another website and 1.6% of users arrived at the website via social media channels.

The most visited pages on the website were

- Contact us page: 16,948 (29.2 %)
- Home page: 13,082 (22.6%)
- Public poisons page: 3,830 (6.4%)
- Healthcare professionals page: 3090 (5.3%)
- Industry-manufacturers 2,928 (5.1%)

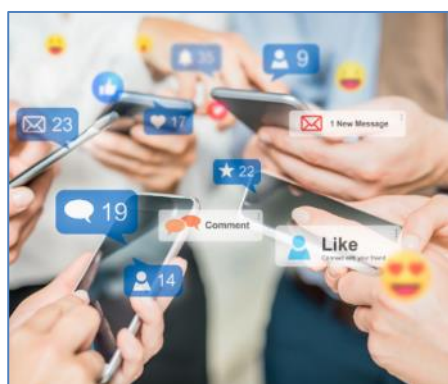
Accessibility audit

The NPIC worked with IA Labs (now renamed Vially) to undertake a digital accessibility audit of our website. IA labs assisted with auditing, training, guidance and technical assistance to NPIC staff. The results of the audit were available in 2024.



NPIC on social media

The National Poisons Information Centre maintains an active social media presence to increase awareness about our service and to promote poison prevention and safety in the home. The NPIC social media platforms should not be used in case of emergency for poisoning advice.



Our Facebook and Instagram (@npicireland) pages are primarily aimed at members of the public and healthcare professionals to deliver information and poisoning prevention messages.

The NPIC Facebook page had over 32,348 followers, 785 posts, 317 stories, and an overall reach of 1,000,478 at the end of 2023. The NPIC Instagram page had over 7,000 followers, 755 Instagram posts, 447 stories, and an overall reach of 64,060.

The NPIC Twitter/X account (@IrelandNpic) is primarily aimed at healthcare professionals to promote the NPIC service. We highlight information on poisoning trends and poison prevention messages, and share advice on the management of poisoning, and important articles from the medical literature. At the end of 2023, the NPIC had over 1,361 followers, had tweeted 1,362 times, and achieved almost half a million Tweet/X impressions.

Raising awareness and outreach activities

Bord Bia Bloom

The NPIC sponsored a show garden entitled 'The Know, Act, Prevent Garden' at the Bord Bia Bloom Festival from 1st to 5th June. Over 100,000 visitors attended the event in the Phoenix Park in Dublin and the NPIC staff engaged with the public to raise awareness of our service and communicate important poison prevention messages to keep everyone safe in their home and garden.



The staff at the National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) is grateful to everyone who supported our work at the Bord Bia Bloom Festival. We were delighted to work with Declan McKenna (garden designer), the Health and Safety Authority and the Health Service Executive MyChild.ie team to develop the garden theme and design. The 'Know, Act, Prevent Garden' was awarded a Silver Medal by the judges and attracted lots of interest thanks to its simplicity, colour, and beautiful low-toxicity plants.

We were delighted to welcome Eanna Ni Lamhna (environmentalist and radio presenter), Marty Morrissey (RTE commentator), Jim O'Toole (CEO of Bord Bia), Dan McSweeney (Chairman of Bord Bia), An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, Minister Heather Humphries, and Minister Simon Harris to our garden, and to speak with them about our role.



Dr Edel Duggan, Clinical Director of the NPIC, was interviewed on Newstalk, the 'Mooney Goes Wild' Show, and by the Irish Examiner about the NPIC's role and the 'The Know, Act, Prevent' garden. In addition, Patricia Casey, NPIC Manager, was interviewed on Highland radio and by Evoke magazine.

We were grateful to colleagues from the Critical Care Directorate at Beaumont Hospital; Sinead Edney, Irene McKitterick, Susan Duane, Johanna Mulvihill, Caragh Ferguson, Andrea Vacariscu, and Clare Morris who volunteered to help at Bloom over the June Bank Holiday weekend. Their help and support was invaluable.

We also enjoyed meeting other hospital colleagues who popped by the garden to wish us well.

Having a show garden at Bord Bia Bloom was an amazing experience and a wonderful opportunity for NPIC to raise awareness of our service. We have lots of wonderful memories of this exciting project and were delighted with the publicity and valuable feedback. The plants from 'The Know, Act, Prevent Garden' were re-homed and are happily growing at the entrance to Beaumont Hospital, thanks to the great gardening skills of Maureen O'Sullivan (head gardener) and her team.

NPIC website and social media engagement during Bloom (31/5/2023-5/6/2023)

- Website: 2,612 page views compared to 813 page views for the same period in 2022.
- The most visited pages were
 - Bloom page (32.9%)
 - Home page (13.9%)
 - Contact us page (12.1%)
 - Low toxicity plant list (4.4%)
- Facebook: 31 posts generated an organic reach of 339,761 (compared to 3,264 for 2022).
- Instagram: 31 posts generated an organic reach of 1,444 (compared to 373 in 2022).
- Twitter: 69 posts generated 33,484 organic impressions (reach in 2022 not available).

HSE Parent and Baby Group Visits

Nicola Cassidy attended HSE Parent and Baby Groups in Dublin City Centre in September and in Killester in October to discuss poison prevention. Thanks to the Public Health Nurses at East Wall Health Centre and Killester Health Centre for the invitation to attend the meetings and raise awareness of the NPIC's work, common poisons in the home, poisoning prevention, and our Public Poisons Line phone number and social media channels.

The following feedback was received,

"Thanks so much for attending the Parent and Baby group in Killarney Court community hall. Your talk was most informative and the interaction with the parents was great. Hopefully, the parents have taken on board all your advice on dangerous products within the home and garden and they now have the knowledge of who to contact if they need advice in the future. I look forward to having you back in 4-6 months' time when a new group of parents are with us."

Beaumont Newsletter

A 'Thank you' message from NPIC Staff describing the National Poisons Information Centre's 'The Know, Act, Prevent Garden' at the Board Bia Bloom festival was featured on the Beaumont Hospital Intranet in June 2023.

An article entitled "Christmas Safety Messages from the NPIC – Play it Safe" written by Conor Hurley featured in the first edition of the Beaumont Hospital B-Hive staff newsletter.

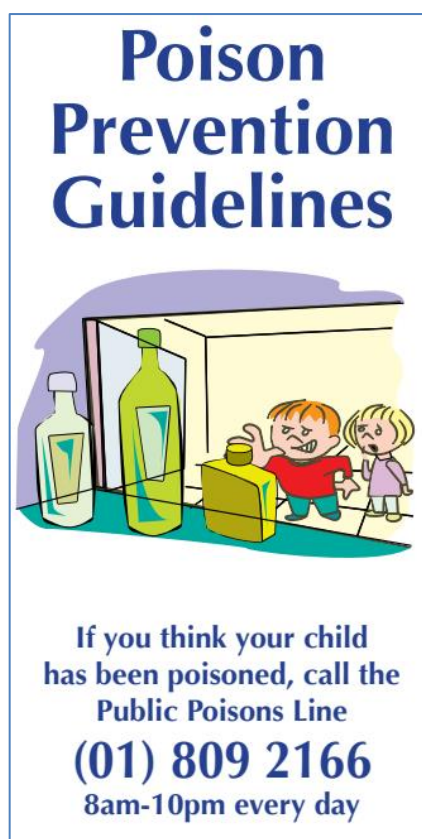


Poison prevention materials

The NPIC poison prevention materials are available free of charge and can be ordered online by healthcare professionals and members of the public from the website www.healthpromotion.ie

In 2023, the following quantities of materials were dispatched;

- 6,342 poison prevention leaflets
- 772 ABC of Poisoning posters
- 15,692 key fobs





Regulatory activities

Working in partnership with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

The Poison Centre’s workload associated with the hospital’s role as the appointed body under Article 45 of the CLP Regulation remained high. The NPIC continued to advise industry on the notification procedure for chemical mixtures placed on the Irish market that are classified as hazardous on the basis of their health or physical effects.

The Poison Centre handled almost 1,000 queries from industry about the registration procedure and checked the quality of approximately 759 product registrations.

The NPIC received 380 new product registrations for industrial products directly in 2023. These product notifications were uploaded onto the Document Management System (DMS) to ensure that this product information was available to NPIC staff when answering emergency enquiries.

By the end of 2023, there were over 600,000 notifications for hazardous chemical mixtures placed on the market in Ireland made through the ECHA PCN portal. This was an 83.9% increase in new product notifications since 2022.

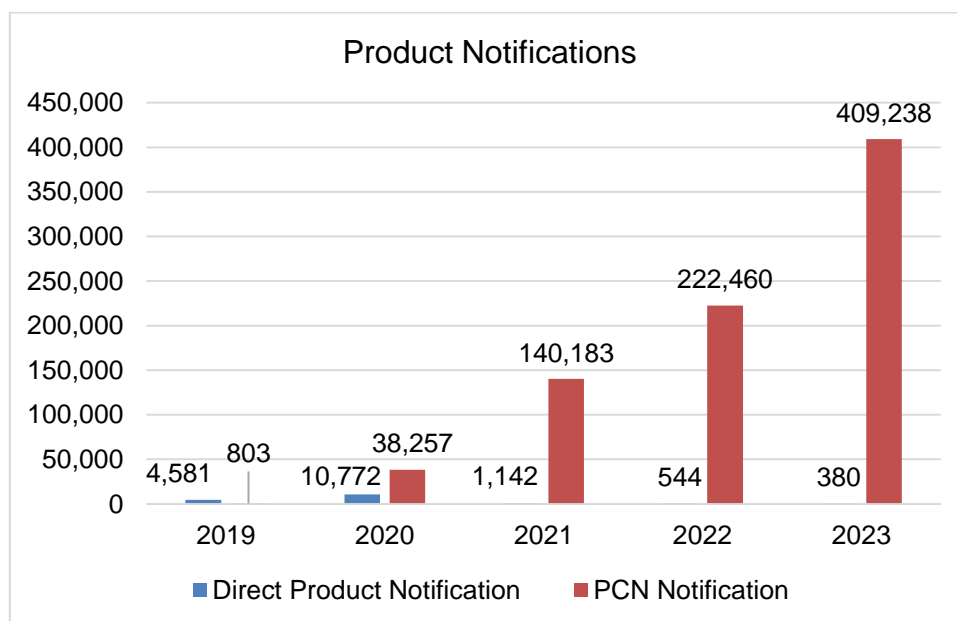


Figure 16: Total number of product notifications received by NPIC

Academic activities

Lectures and presentations

- Dr Duggan gave an oral presentation entitled “Paediatric Poisoning Cases Referred to Hospital Emergency Departments by the National Poisons Information Centre” at the Irish Paediatric Emergency Medicine conference at Tallaght Hospital on 16th March.
- Dr Duggan gave a talk on toxicology to the anaesthesia NCHD's at Beaumont Hospital on 31st March.
- Dr Duggan gave a talk on Toxic Alcohols to Intensive Care and Anaesthetic trainees at Beaumont Hospital in April 2023.
- Dr Duggan delivered a toxicology lecture on the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Experienced Provider Course on the 5th May at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital.
- Poison centre staff joined a webinar on Chemical Agents of Opportunity for Terrorism on 30th August organised by the American College of Medical Toxicology.
- Dr Duggan recorded a lecture on "The role of the NPIC" for the clinical biochemists in Trinity College Dublin in October 2023.
- Nicola Cassidy prepared an e-poster entitled “Poisoning Cases Referred to Adult Hospital Emergency Departments by the National Poisons Information Centre” for the Irish Association of Emergency Medicine conference in Athlone on 25th October 2023.
- Dr Duggan was a member of faculty teaching on the CPD day ‘Emergency Toxicology’ at the RCSI on 21st November.
- Conor Hurley presented a poster entitled: "Toxic Alcohols: Review of Calls to the National Poisons Information Centre and Laboratory Testing" at the Association of Clinical Biochemists in Ireland Annual Conference on 20th October 2023.
- Niamh English gave a presentation on ‘Safety in the Home’ to staff working at Servier during the company Safety Week in October 2023 and received the following feedback.

“Thank you for your Poisons Talk with us during SAFE Week. Feedback is all very positive. This includes everything from the length of your talk being perfect, sharing impactful stories and the most common feedback was ‘I never knew the service existed!’ But we do now! You can consider your mission of raising awareness accomplished!”

Peer reviewer activities

Dr Edel Duggan is a peer reviewer for the European Journal of Clinical Pharmacology.

Patricia Casey and Nicola Cassidy were abstract reviewers for the European Association of Poison Centres and Clinical Toxicologists 43rd Annual Congress.

Education and training

John Herbert completed the Beaumont Hospital Management and Leadership Development Programme, with merit (QQI Level 6, 15 FET credits).

John Herbert obtained a Statistics and Data Science Post Graduate Certificate from Trinity College Dublin.

Conor Hurley completed Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Toxicology at Cardiff University for which he was awarded a distinction.

Conor Hurley became a European Registered Toxicologist (ERT) through the Register of Toxicologists in Ireland.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

In 2023, staff attended meetings, webinars and workshops virtually and in person.

Many of the online events were attended by several staff members.

- NPIS CPD Days on 8th and 9th March 2023 in Cardiff (virtual event).
- Mini-EAPCCT NPIS CPD virtual meeting on 4th May 2023.
- Dr Edel Duggan and Patricia Casey attended the NPIS CPD event on 13th and 14th September 2023, in Edinburgh to celebrate the NPIS Edinburgh's 60th anniversary.
- NPIS virtual CPD session on 13th December 2023 Christmas event: "The pen is mightier than the sword but has the web killed off the reference book!"
- EAPCCT Fellows' Webinar: Risk prediction and management of paracetamol overdose, 13th October 2023.
- EAPCCT Fellows' Webinar: Valproic acid toxicity - confronting the complexities, confusion and challenges, 6th December 2023.
- Sinead Doyle attended the ECHA Interact Portal Users' Event on 5th May, 2023, virtually.
- Sinead Doyle attended the ECHA Interact Portal Users' Event on 12th October, 2023, virtually.
- John Herbert attended a webinar entitled 'Organophosphate pesticide poisoning: understanding the risks and improving the management' organised by the European Society for Emergency Medicine in November 2023.

Other meetings

- John Herbert attended meetings of the Early Warning Early Trends group in February, May, August and November 2023.
- Staff attended the TOXBASE Transition webinar on 20th September 2023.
- John Herbert represented the NPIC at the 2023 TOXBASE editing meetings in March, June, and November.
- Nicola Cassidy and Sinead Doyle attended the Bord Bia Bloom 2023 Marketing Communications Workshop on 14th March.
- John Herbert attended the launch of International Overdose Awareness Day 2023 virtually in August.
- Staff attended Online EXCEL training hosted by Beaumont Hospital.
- Staff attended the Beaumont Hospital Open Disclosure “Managing Conflict” webinar held on 13 September 2023.
- John Herbert attended the EMCDDA technical expert meeting on new synthetic opioids: strengthening preparedness, response, and resilience to emerging trends in September, virtually.
- Patricia Casey attended the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability Conference hosted by the HSA and EPA on 19th October 2023 (morning only).
- Staff attended the Beaumont Hospital Open Disclosure “Patient involvement in the incident management process” webinar in October 2023
- Patricia Casey attended the Beaumont Hospital Risk Register Training on 17th November 2023.
- Dr Duggan attended the National Research Ethics Conference organised jointly by the Health Research Board and the National Office for Research Ethics Committees at the Gibson Hotel on 30th November.

European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists Congress 2023

Patricia Casey and Conor Hurley attended the 43rd International Congress of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT) Congress in Palma, Mallorca, Spain from May 23rd to 26th 2023.

The NPIC presented three posters entitled;

- Collaboration between a poisons information centre and a national authority to protect consumer safety.
- A survey of antidote availability in Irish hospitals with emergency departments 2022.
- Trends in calls to the National Poisons Information Centre of Ireland following the introduction of a phone number for the general public.

Nicola Cassidy was a member of the EAPCCT Communications Group and helped raise awareness of the congress, the congress themes, and presentations via Twitter/X in 2023.

Publications

Abstracts that were presented at the 43rd European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists (EAPCCT), 23–26 May 2023, Palma de Mallorca, Spain were published in *Clinical Toxicology*, 61(sup1), 1–129.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2023.2192024>

A survey of antidote availability in Irish hospitals with emergency departments 2022. Conor T Hurley, Edel Duggan and John X Herbert (abstract 137, page 66).

Collaboration between a poisons information centre and a national authority to protect consumer safety. Patricia Casey, Edel Duggan, Sinead McMikan (abstract 148, page 71).

Trends in calls to the National Poisons Information Centre of Ireland following the introduction of a phone number for the general public. Niamh English and Patricia Casey (abstract 159, Page 79).

Committee membership

- Dr Edel Duggan is a member of the NPIS Clinical Standards Group with Directors from the UK National Poisons Information Service.
- Dr Edel Duggan joined the meetings of the Commissioning and Clinical Standards Group of the NPIS.
- Dr Edel Duggan and John Herbert are members of the Early Warning Early Trends Sub-Committee of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs.
- Patricia Casey is a member of the EAPCCT working group on poisons centre activities.
- John Herbert is a member of the UK TOXBASE editing group.
- Dr Edel Duggan co-chaired the Nutrivigilance Steering Group Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
- Nicola Cassidy is a member of the EAPCCT Communications Group.

NPIC staff meetings and journal club

The NPIC held regular staff meetings and journal club meetings during the year. Some of the interesting presentations and articles presented by NPIC staff at the NPIC Journal Club meetings included;

- Single bag high dose intravenous N-acetylcysteine associated with decreased hepatotoxicity compared to triple bag intravenous N-acetylcysteine in high-risk acetaminophen ingestions *Clinical Toxicology*, 2021:60:4, 493-498.
- Characteristics of analytically confirmed gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB) positive patients in the emergency department: presentation, poly-drug use, disposition and impact on intensive care resource utilisation. *Clinical Toxicology*, 2023, 61(4):241-247. doi: 10.1080/15563650.2023.2178933.
- Increasing use of sodium nitrite in suicides - an emerging trend. *Forensic Science, Medicine and Pathology* volume 18, pages 311–318 (2022).

Data requests

- The NPIC provided the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) with data on Bonjela enquiries and also on codeine enquiries over the period 2010 to 2022.
- The NPIC provided the Health and Safety Authority with data on enquiries about :
 - dishwasher tablets during the period 2018-2022
 - laundry detergent capsules during the period 2012-2022
 - the product Klear-Vol
 - essential oils (brief summary of calls in 2021)

Public relations and media opportunities

In collaboration with the Health and Safety Authority and the Health Service Executive, staff at NPIC presented the 'Know, Act, Prevent Garden' at the Bord Bia Bloom Festival from 1st to 5th June. This resulted in valuable opportunities for radio and print interviews and opportunities to raise awareness.



Radio interviews

- Declan McKenna (Garden designer) was interviewed on Morning Ireland RTÉ1
- Dr Edel Dugan was interviewed by Derek Mooney for 'Mooney Goes Wild' on RTÉ1
- Dr Edel Duggan was interviewed by Pat Kenny on Newstalk
- Patricia Casey was interviewed by Greg Hughes on the 'Nine 'til Noon' programme on Highland Radio
- Sorcha Nic Mhathuna (MyChild.ie, HSE) was interviewed on RTÉ 1 Nuacht, TG4 Nuacht, and RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta Tús Áite.

Print interviews

- “Stay on your guard about the risks of poisoning at home” - Margaret McAuliffe’s story of contacting the NPIC advice when her daughter was accidentally poisoned after ingesting an unknown reed diffuser featured in the Irish Examiner in May 2023. Dr Duggan was also interviewed by Helen O’Callaghan.
<https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/parenting/arid-41150530.html>
- “Why you should NEVER get a child to vomit if they’ve been poisoned” - Patricia Casey was interviewed by EVOKE/Rollercoaster, about the work of the National Poison Information Centre and the NPIC Show Garden at Bord Bia Bloom in June 2023.
<https://rollercoaster.ie/family/parenting/accidental-poisoning-in-children-npic/>
- “How do I spot if my child has been poisoned?” - Dr Edel Duggan was interviewed by Sheila Wayman for the Health and Family section of the Irish Times to promote the launch of the 2022 NPIC Annual Report in December 2023. <https://www.irishtimes.com/health/your-family/2024/01/09/how-do-i-spot-if-my-child-has-been-poisoned/>
- “Elf and safety at home — during the most chaotic time of the year” - Nicola Cassidy was interviewed by Helen O’Callaghan of the Irish Examiner on seasonal Christmas poisoning risks. The article was published in the Parenting Magazine of the Irish Examiner on 12th December.
<https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/parenting/arid-41288092.html>

The Health and Safety Authority produced a video at Bord Bia Bloom that featured Dr Edel Duggan with HSA colleagues. The video was shared on the website and social media platforms. In addition, the HSA produced a leaflet entitled “Use Chemicals Safely at Home and in the Garden” that the NPIC contributed to.

Dr Edel Duggan was interviewed by Trinity College Ph.D. student, Gene Williams, about a foraging study survey, in December 2023.

Ministerial visit

Hildegard Naughton, Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach and at the Department of Health, visited the NPIC at Beaumont Hospital on Thursday 7th September, 2023. This visit was in collaboration with the Minister's visit to St Michael's Ward at Beaumont Hospital. We were delighted to discuss the NPIC's role and our membership of the Early Warning Early Trends Sub-Committee of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs.

Poisons.ie - Home and garden safety

The NPIC developed a room by room guide for the home and garden shed with a series of blogs describing some common household and garden poisons and giving poison prevention advice. In addition, a series of illustrated plant guides was developed. A "Guide to low toxicity plants for child friendly gardens and play spaces" contains a list of common flowers, shrubs, and trees and some well-known plants that are generally considered to be low in toxicity. In addition, a "Guide to toxic plants" and a "Pet plant awareness" were developed. The featured plants are listed according to the season when they typically flower and are accompanied by a photo (used for illustration purposes only and not to be used to fully identify a plant). The articles were compiled using various reference sources including

- (1) Poisonous Plants: A Guide for Parents and Childcare Providers by Dauncey, Elizabeth A. Published by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (2010), ISBN 10: 184246406X ISBN 13: 9781842464069
- (2) 2022 Horticultural Trades Association (HTA) Guide to potentially harmful plants
- (3) TOXBASE®.

The NPIC is extremely grateful to Elizabeth Dauncey for her help and expertise with the preparation of low toxicity and toxic plant information.

Collaboration with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The 'Guide to low toxicity plants for child friendly gardens and play spaces' was shared with colleagues at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. They have used the resources in several ways:

- 1) Information will be disseminated to the early learning and care services
- 2) Tusla will be asked to make the links to the Low Toxic Plants resources available to service users on their website as a support to service development
- 3) Information will be used in 2024 in the development of their Universal Design Guidelines tools
- 4) A link to the NPIC website also features on their website.

People of HSE

NPIC staff featured in the 'People of HSE at Christmas' posts on social media.

The post on X read

"The National Poisons Information Centre (@IrelandNpic) team work in Beaumont Hospital. They provide a 24 hour emergency service to healthcare professionals to help with the management of poisonings, as well as a Public Poisons Line. #PeopleOfHSE



The National Poisons Information Centre is available every day of the year to give advice if poisoning occurs.

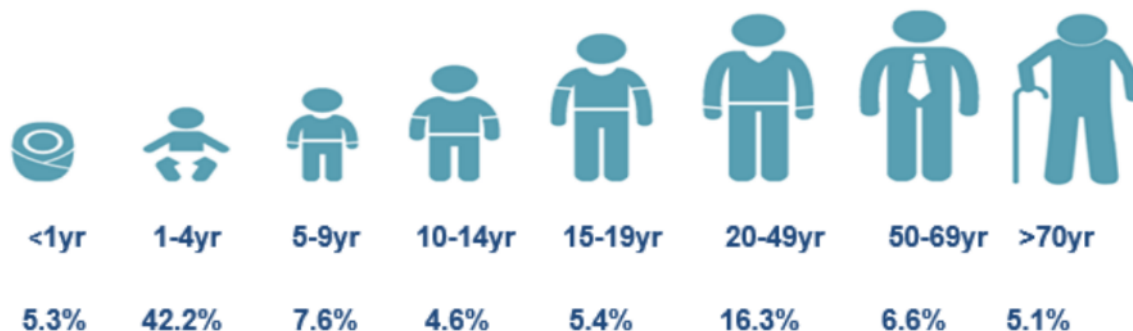
- Healthcare Professional Line: 01 809 2566 (24hr)
- Public Poisons Line: 01 809 2166 (8am to 10pm daily)



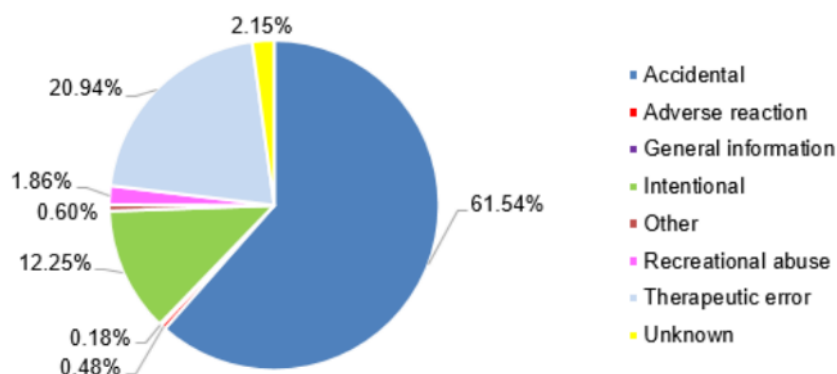
NPIC's year in numbers 2023

NPIC's year in numbers 2023

- 10,805 enquires answered
- May was the busiest month in 2023
- The busiest hours of the day were 4pm-9pm



Poisoning circumstances



Top 10 agents involved in poisoning in 2023

1. Paracetamol	Medication	6. Multivitamins	Medication
2. Ibuprofen	Medication	7. Mixed Essential Oils	Industrial
3. Ethanol	Household	8. Sodium Hypochlorite	Household
4. Fabric Cleaning Liquid Sachet / Capsules	Household	9. Quetiapine	Medication
5. Surfactant / Detergent Other	Industrial	10. Sertraline	Medication

Figure 17: NPIC's year in numbers 2023

Contact details for NPIC	
Healthcare professional lines	01 809 2566 / 01 809 2568
Available 24 hours	01 837 9964 / 01 837 9966
Public poison line	01 809 2166
Available 8am – 10pm daily	
Administration line	01 797 4211
9am - 3.30pm Monday-Friday	
Website	www.poisons.ie
Email	npicdublin@beaumont.ie
	@NPICireland
	@Npicireland
	@IrelandNpic

