



# Poison HOTLINE

1-800-222-1222

October 2015



*Did you know .....*

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that prescription drug abuse in the U.S. has reached epidemic proportions.

Facts:

- Every day, 44 people die from overdose of prescription painkillers.
- In 2010, enough prescription painkillers were prescribed to medicate every American adult round-the-clock for a month.
- More deaths result from drug overdose than from motor vehicle collisions for persons 25-64 years of age.
- 1 in 20 persons (12 years of age and older) reported using a prescription painkiller for nonmedical use in the past year.

## Pregnancy Related Concerns in an Overdose Patient

The Iowa Poison Control Center (IPCC) routinely recommends a urine pregnancy test (hCG) be obtained in female overdose patients. So why do we recommend this?

First, many physical and physiologic changes occur during pregnancy which alters drug pharmacokinetics. These alterations can change both absorption and distribution of drugs within the pregnant women's body, consequently affecting the amount of drug the fetus may be exposed to.

Second, while the placenta helps to regulate drug exposure to the fetus, fetal exposure can still occur. If a pregnant mother is in need of an antidote, one must remember the antidote will be regulated by the placenta as well, so the baby may or may not receive the antidote. Also, depending on what agent is ingested there can be a greater risk to either the mom or fetus.

### Pregnancy Overdose Examples:

- *Iron*  
Poses a greater risk to the mom as the placenta blocks some transport of iron to the fetus.
- *Carbon Monoxide*  
Poses a greater risk to the fetus as fetal carboxyhemoglobin concentrations tend to be greater than the maternal concentrations.

Lastly, there is the concern regarding adverse effects on the development of the fetus. While the IPCC helps in the management of acute and chronic overdoses in pregnant women, we also recommend contacting the teratogen hotline named OTIS (Organization of Teratology Information Specialists) at 1-866-626-6847 for fetal risk assessment. This is a free service provided by a non-profit organization that has trained specialists in teratology, including leading physicians that specialize in teratology. This service helps provide up to date and evidence based information on the risk to the fetus in regards to exposures that occur in pregnancy.

*Kimberly Zellmer PharmD, BCPS, SPI  
Specialist in Poison Information*

**POISON**  
**Help**  
1-800-222-1222

The logo for Poison Help, featuring the word "POISON" in a bold, sans-serif font above the word "Help" in a larger, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the word "Help" is a red pill bottle with a white cap and a white skull and crossbones symbol on its side. Below the word "Help" is the phone number "1-800-222-1222".

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Post and share this edition of **Poison Hotline** with your colleagues. Send comments or questions to Poison Hotline, 712-234-8775 (fax) or [Tammy.Noble@UnityPoint.org](mailto:Tammy.Noble@UnityPoint.org). To subscribe or unsubscribe from this distribution list, contact the IPCC education office at 712-279-3717. Read past issues of **Poison Hotline** at [www.iowapoisson.org](http://www.iowapoisson.org).