

For immediate release

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**Nearly 44,000 Americans Take Advantage of
First-Ever National Poison Hotline
American Association of Poison Control Center Continues
Hotline Education Campaign During Poison Prevention Week**

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 13, 2002 - The American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) today kicked off National Poison Prevention Week by announcing that almost 44,000 Americans have called the new national poison center hotline since its official launch on January 30, 2002.

The new hotline was created by Congress to create immediate access to the nation's 65 local poison centers through one national number, 1-800-222-1222. The new hotline is already helping tens of thousands of Americans take advantage of the free and confidential services of their local poison centers. The hotline is also saving health care dollars. Every dollar spent on a poison control center saves nearly seven dollars in otherwise unnecessary medical care.

During National Poison Prevention Week, March 17-23, the AAPCC is encouraging more Americans to post 1-800-222-1222 and to take advantage of the life-saving and cost-effective services of poison centers across the country.

"A national survey conducted in January found that only one in ten Americans knew the number to their local poison center. In an emergency situation, not knowing this number can prove deadly. That is why Congress created one single national number for our nation's poison control centers," said AAPCC President Alan Woolf, MD, MPH. "Whether you call this new number from home, from work, or while traveling, expert poison center help is always only one easy phone call away."

During National Poison Prevention Week, the AAPCC is continuing its multi-year public education campaign to inform people of the new poison hotline. The campaign

(More)

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includes print and radio public service announcements, a wide distribution of stickers, magnets, brochures and posters with the new hotline number and a new Web site, www.1-800-222-1222.info. Local poison centers across the United States are also taking an active role in the education campaign through their own promotion and outreach activities.

“Since 1961, National Poison Prevention Week has been educating parents, caregivers and others about how to protect their families from poison exposures. During National Poison Prevention Week 2002, we encourage people to post the new national hotline, 1-800-222-1222, in their homes and offices. This week is also a good time to learn more about the information and emergency services available through our nation’s network of poison control centers,” said Vice Chairman of the Poison Prevention Week Council (www.poisonprevention.org) and Associate Director of the AAPCC, Rose Ann G. Soloway, RN, MEd.

The new poison hotline is authorized and funded under the Poison Control Center Enhancement and Awareness Act (P.L.106-174). Funding is administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, which works in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC oversees activities related to the toll-free number through a cooperative agreement with the AAPCC.

United States Poison Centers

Last year, poison centers in the United States answered nearly 2.25 million emergency phone calls. More than half of those poison exposures occurred in children under the age of six, and most happened at home. The vast majority – 77 percent – of these exposures can be treated over the phone, right where they happen, with telephone advice and assistance from poison center experts. If emergency medical care is needed to treat a poisoning, poison center experts provide information on treatment to emergency personnel and other health care providers. Additionally, the expert staff at poison centers are available to answer non-emergency poison-related questions.

Stop and Think Sam

Stop-and-Think Sam is a safety-conscious pooch who teaches children and their families how to prevent poisonings. Find out more from www.merck-medco.com.

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The American Association of Poison Control Centers is a nationwide not-for-profit organization of poison centers and others interested in the prevention and treatment of poisoning.