



Study finds spike in children ingesting melatonin, hand sanitizer

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor



Editor's note: For the latest news on COVID-19, visit <http://bit.ly/AAPNewsCOVID19>.

U.S. poison control centers have seen a spike in children ingesting melatonin and hand sanitizer during the COVID-19 pandemic, even as dangerous ingestions of any substance decreased, according to a new study.

Researchers analyzed data on poison control center calls involving children ages 19 and younger from mid-March 2020 through the end of the year and compared them to the same period in the three previous years.

There were 861,626 ingestions of dangerous substances during the pandemic period, a decrease of 6.3% compared to the pre-pandemic average, according to "COVID-19 and Pediatric Ingestions," (Lelak KA, et al. *Pediatrics*. April 27, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2021-051001>).

Melatonin, sold as a dietary supplement to help people sleep, was the most frequently ingested substance by children during the pandemic. There were nearly 45,000 poison control calls for melatonin, an increase of 70%. During the pandemic, there also were 18,099 calls to poison control centers for ingestion of hand sanitizer, a 43% increase from pre-pandemic years.

"The heightened hand sanitizer and melatonin ingestions parallels the ubiquitous rise in the sale and use of such products during the pandemic and ease of accessibility among children," authors wrote. "This demands continued attention given reports of methanol-contaminated hand sanitizer ingestions with severe adverse outcomes."

Looking at all ingestions, about 13.3% involved teens, up slightly from 13%. Intentional ingestions made up 10.8% of the pandemic-period calls compared to 10.3% before the pandemic.

Authors said these increases "may reflect heightened social, emotional, and psychological stressors on this age group" and called for additional emotional supports for adolescents.

About 4.2% of all ingestions had clinically significant outcomes during the pandemic, up from 3.6%. Authors



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suggested this may be due to people delaying care.

Resources

- [AAP News story "Keep hand sanitizers out of children's reach"](#)
- [AAP guidance on supporting children's emotional needs during the pandemic](#)