

# Medication Safety: Who Ya Gonna Call? The Poison Center!

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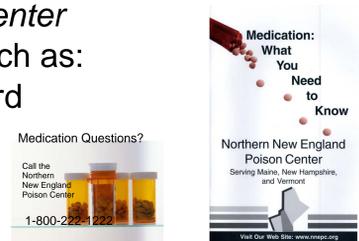
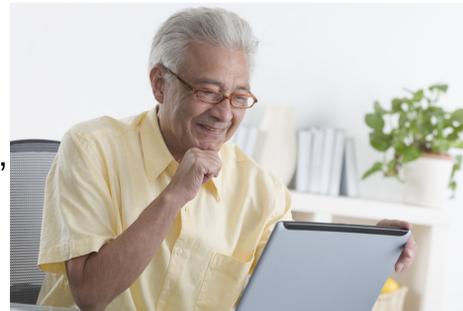
## Background

- Complex medication-related poisonings among older adults are a growing public health concern.
- Older adults are at greater risk for medication errors, adverse reactions and overdoses which can lead to hospitalization and sometimes death.
- The majority of older adults do not see the Poison Center (PC) as a resource for their medication-related poisonings.
- Prior education outreaches to older adults have not impacted penetrance among older adults.
- Because of the lack of awareness and low utilization of the PC among older adults, they may not get adequate, cost-effective treatment for their medication-related poisonings.



## Methods

- The New Hampshire State Committee on Aging (SCOA), a governor-appointed taskforce, served as a senior advisory committee to the Northern New England Poison Center (NNEPC).
- The advisory committee assisted the NNEPC in developing educational materials targeting older adults.
- The objective of the materials was to educate older adults about:
  - Their risk for medication-related poisoning
  - The importance of using effective medication safety practices (such as medication lists, medication calendars and pill reminder boxes)
  - When and how to use the depth of poison center services
- This partnership resulted in a packet of education materials:
  - Information resource - *Medication, What You Need to Know*.
  - Marketing magnet – *Medication Questions? Call the Northern New England Poison Center*
  - Medication management tools such as:
    - Health Information wallet card
    - Medication list
    - Medication calendar
    - Promotional postcard



- In spring 2008, the materials were promoted to senior-serving agencies and advocates for distribution in targeted communities.
- To measure the education program's effectiveness
  - Recipients were encouraged to complete and return an enclosed survey.
  - Penetrance among exposure calls for those 60 years of age and older not placed by a health care facility or other were tracked and compared over time.
    - Targeted communities' older adult call penetrance for the 12 months prior to the distribution of the materials were compared to the penetrance for the 12 months after.

## Results

- There was a 16% increase in older adult call penetrance in New Hampshire.
- 53 seniors completed educational materials evaluations.
  - 92% said they were likely to keep the materials as a resource.
  - 74% said they would recommend the materials to others.
  - More than half used four of the medication safety tools: medication list, pill reminder box, PC magnet and medication wallet card.
  - Prior to receiving the materials, only 15% had called the PC for a medication-related question and 11% for a medication-related emergency.
  - After receiving the materials, 51% stated they were likely to call the PC in the future for a medication-related question and 72% were likely to call for a medication-related emergency.

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## Conclusion

- The distribution of these educational materials increased the target population's appropriate utilization of NNEPC services.
- Survey results indicate an increase in the use of medication safety practices and awareness of NNEPC services among older adults.



## Discussion

- Older adults continue to under-utilize the NNEPC for medication-related poisonings.
- The NNEPC education programs need to prioritize older adults as a target audience.
- Continued targeted distribution will help prevent medication-related poisonings and improve the percentage of older adults accessing adequate, cost-effective treatment via poison centers.

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New Hampshire State Committee on Aging

**POISON**  
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New Hampshire