

Unintentional Poisonings in the United States

A poisoning exposure can be defined as the ingestion, injection, inhalation, absorption or contact with a substance that produces a toxic effect or bodily harm. An unintentional poisoning occurs when the individual exposed to the substance does not intend to cause harm to him/herself. In the United States, and in Oklahoma, prescription and illegal drugs are the cause of most unintentional poisonings. However, poisonings are also caused by a variety of other gases, vapors, chemicals, and substances, such as alcohol, pesticides, carbon monoxide, aerosols, and even water.

- 31,758 people (10.3 deaths per 100,000) died from unintentional poisoning in 2009, that's 87 deaths everyday.¹

- In 2009, unintentional poisoning surpassed motor vehicle crashes to become the leading cause of injury death for persons aged 25-64; it has led in the 35-54 year age group since 2005.¹

- 91% of unintentional poisoning deaths were due to legal and illegal drugs.²

- Overdoses of prescription painkillers led to 14,800 deaths in 2008.²

- From 1999 – 2008, the rise in overdose deaths paralleled a 300% increase in the sale of painkillers.²

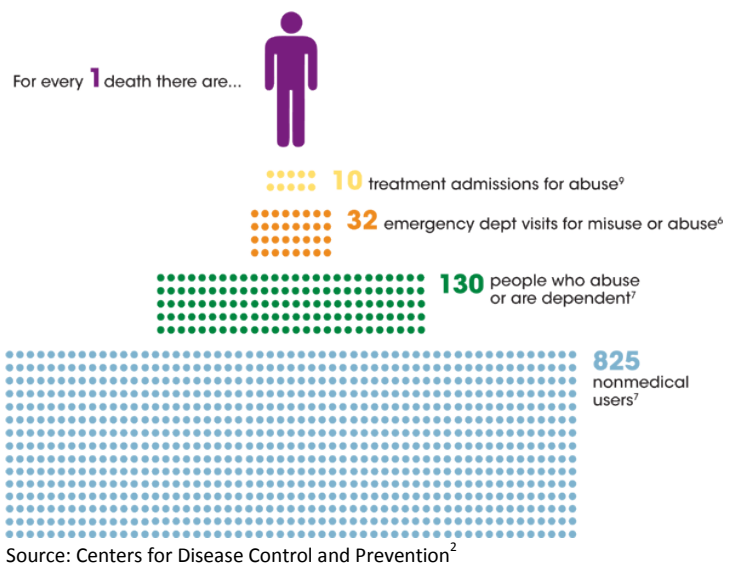
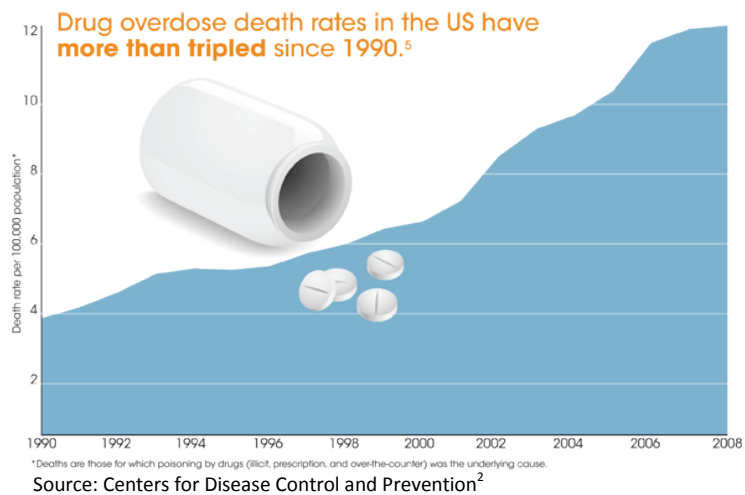
- In 2010, 2 million people reported using prescription painkillers nonmedically for the first time within the last year – nearly 5,500 a day.²

- Unintentional poisoning caused 831,295 people to visit emergency departments in 2010.²

- Poison control centers reported receiving calls about 2.4 million human poison exposure cases.²

- Family and friends were often the source of the prescription drugs in unintentional poisoning fatalities.²

- Nonmedical use of prescription painkillers costs more than \$72.5 billion each year in direct health care costs.²



Unintentional Poisonings in Oklahoma

Unintentional poisoning deaths have surpassed motor vehicle crash deaths as the leading cause of injury death in Oklahoma. Over the past decade, unintentional poisoning deaths have increased 470%. Two Oklahomans die each day, on average, from an unintentional poisoning.

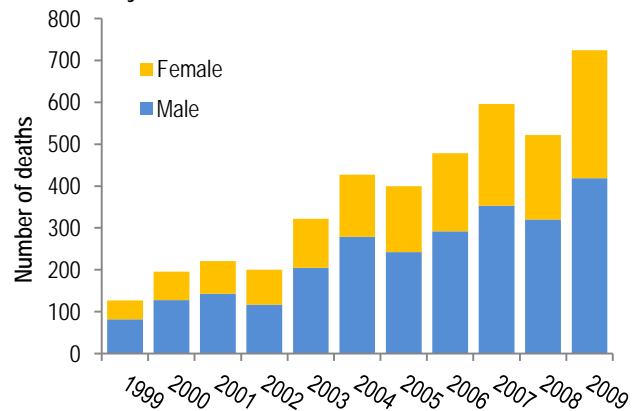
- In 2009, Oklahoma's rate of unintentional poisoning deaths was 2 times higher than the national average (20.3 deaths per 100,000).¹
- Over the past decade, nearly 100,000 years of potential life were lost before age 65 due to unintentional poisonings.¹
- In 2009, Oklahoma had the highest prevalence of prescription painkiller abuse for the population 12 and over, that is 240,000 Oklahomans.³
- Per capita, Oklahoma is one of the leading states in prescription painkiller sales.²
- Prescription opioid painkillers were 4 of the top 5 medications responsible for unintentional poisoning deaths of Oklahomans between 2007 and 2009.⁴
- Methadone and alprazolam (also known as Xanax) were the top two medications involved in unintentional poisoning deaths.⁴
- Persons aged 35-54 accounted for more than half of the unintentional poisoning deaths due to prescription drugs, but only one-fourth of the population.⁴

Addressing the Problem

The Injury Prevention Service is committed to addressing this public health epidemic. Here is a sample of our efforts in the area of unintentional poisonings:

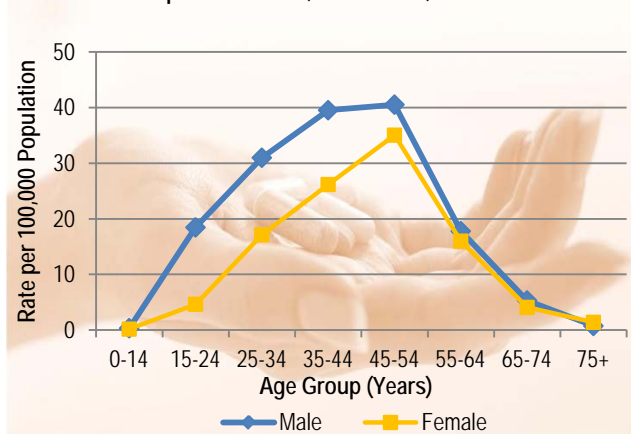
- Collaborating with key partners and stakeholders, including:
 - the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Unintentional Poisoning Deaths by Year and Gender, Oklahoma, 1999-2009



Source: Oklahoma Injury Prevention Service⁴

Unintentional Poisoning Death Rates by Age Group and Gender, Oklahoma, 2007-2009



Source: Oklahoma Injury Prevention Service⁴

Nonmedical use of painkillers

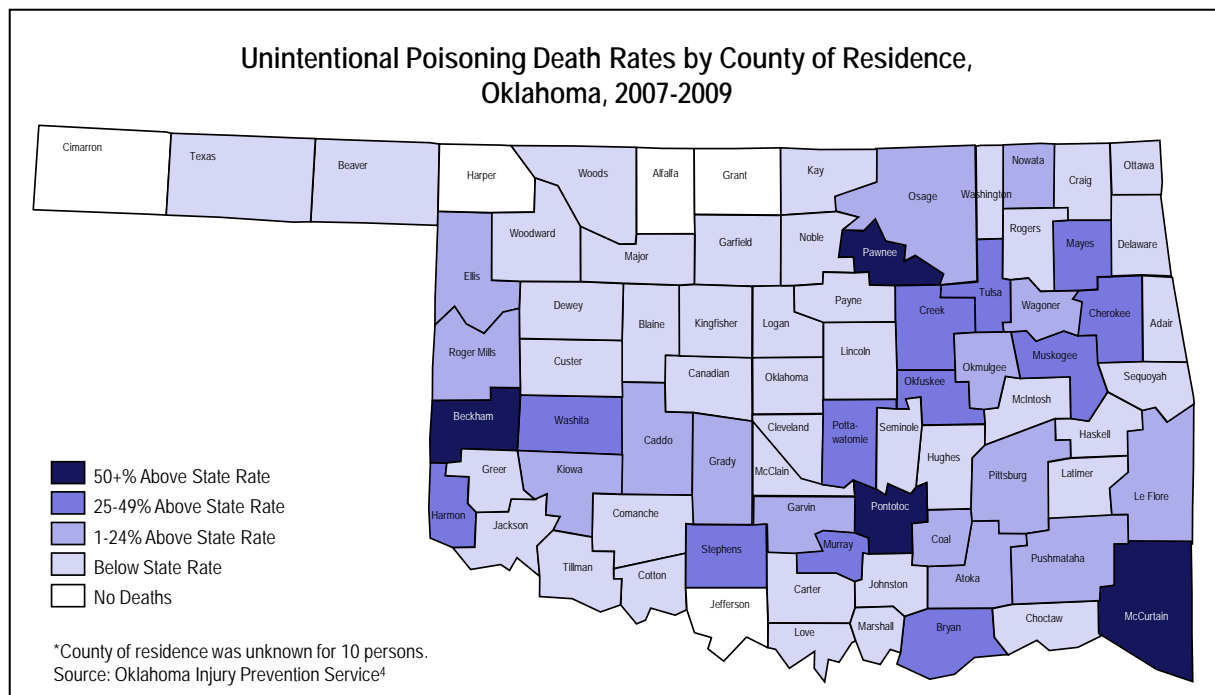
Top 10 states by percentage of population*



*Percentage of state's population age 12 and older that used painkillers for nonmedical reasons during a 12-month period ending in 2009.

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control
- the State Epidemiology Outcomes Workgroup
- the Oklahoma Prevention Leadership Coalition
- physicians, medical professionals, and their boards and associations.
- Maintaining a statewide unintentional poisoning death surveillance system.
- Naming unintentional poisoning a Core Violence and Injury Prevention Program (Core VIPP) injury prevention priority area.
- Developing clinical guidelines for Oklahoma physicians who prescribe pain medication.
- Creating, distributing, and presenting educational material.
- Promoting the use of the Oklahoma Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PMP).



References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System. Retrieved from <http://webappa.cdc.gov/cgi-bin/broker.exe>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Unintentional Poisoning. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning/index.html>
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2009). Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Retrieved from <http://oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k9NSDUH/2k9Results.htm>
4. Injury Prevention Service. Unintentional poisoning fatality surveillance system.