

Advisory from the NJ Poison Control Center



Dramatic Increase in Youth Self-Harm Attempts

Alarming Trend in New Jersey

What does an 11-year-old in North Jersey, a 13-year-old in South Jersey and a 16-year-old in Central Jersey have in common? All three New Jersey adolescents are sadly part of an alarming trend of intentional self-harm cases. Last year, the NJ Poison Control Center assisted in the medical management of over 1,500 suicide attempts in preteens and teens.

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We have a real public health crisis happening in our state as our data continues to show a steady rate of increase of children attempting to intentionally harm themselves.

DIANE CALELLO ——— ”
Executive and Medical Director

[NJ Poison Control Center](#)

[Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#)

1-800-222-1222



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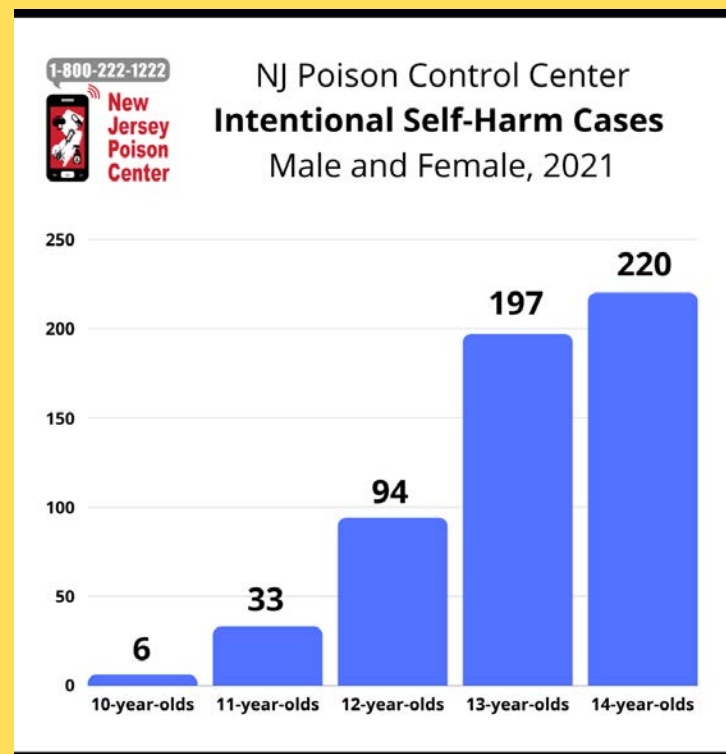
This alarming trend in New Jersey began several years before the COVID-19 pandemic and cases have drastically increased through 2021. "Since New Jersey law does not require hospitals and healthcare facilities to report overdoses to the poison control center, our data likely captures only a portion of the self-harm attempts in our youth happening every day," says Calello.



Most adults are unaware of the increase in cases of preteens and teens who have attempted self-harm in New Jersey.

Mainstream media often reports only on the children who have died from suicide, not on those who attempted suicide.

Many more youth attempt self-harm than die from self-harm. The sad truth is New Jersey children are attempting suicide at a rate which continues to increase.



"Our data should sound the alarm. If you're a parent, coach, teacher or friend, talking to teens about identifying suicidal behaviors in peers is key. Often, a child will express suicidal thoughts to friends through texts or social media before attempting to take their own life. Teaching our preteens and teens to speak up – right away – could be a critical life-saving intervention," says Calello.

Household chemicals, medicines, and other common items in and around the home can pose a dangerous threat not only to young children but also older children/teens experiencing suicidal ideologies. Many household items, especially medicines, can have dangerous effects when used in the wrong way or in large quantities.



Key Safety Tips To Prevent Misuse or Abuse of Home Medicines

- Secure medicines. Lock them up to prevent access by adolescents and young adults.
- Only adults should give medicine. Children and adolescents should not self-medicate.
- Remove unused or expired medicines both prescription and non-prescription.
- Drop-off unneeded medicines at your local [medicine drop box](#). You can also drop off medicines during [DEA Drug Take Back Days](#) (every April and October).

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Given our recent data combined with the known risk of [prescription drug abuse](#) among adolescents and young adults, it's no longer enough to just keep home medicines up high and out of sight and reach.

Preventing suicide attempts require adults to lock up home medicines after each use. Just because something is prescribed by a healthcare professional doesn't mean it is safe.

BRUCE RUCK
Managing Director

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If you think someone took too much medicine, contact your local poison control center immediately for medical treatment advice.

**Anyone can call for medical help –
children, teens and adults**

Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and health professionals.

Get help 24/7

Call 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)

1-800-222-1222



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**If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up
or having a seizure, call 9-1-1**