

FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF CHILDHOOD POISONING FROM INGESTION OF CIGARETTES IN GREECE

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OBJECTIVE: The aim of the study is to identify the magnitude of cigarette product ingestion among young children in Greece and propose prevention measures.

METHODS

During the five-year period 1996-2000, 426 poisonings due to ingestion of cigarette or cigarette butt out of 1766 poisonings in children aged 0-3 years old were recorded at the Emergency Department Injury Surveillance System (EDISS). Specially trained health visitors interviewed in person the child's guardian on the basis of a pre-coded questionnaire. All information is recorded and coded in a computerized database. Statistical analysis was undertaken through simple cross-tabulations of data.

RESULTS

The estimated incidence rate was 12,3 per 10000 children-years. Boys (55%) as well as infants 12-23 months old (60%) are at higher risk for a poisoning from ingestion of cigarettes. Predominance place of these injuries was the home, more specifically the living room, mainly during the afternoon hours between 18.00- 21.00. It worth noting that half of the children were under adult supervision when the injury occurred. Hospitalization, mostly for one day was required in 94% of the cases.

CONCLUSION: The ingestion of cigarettes by infants represents injuries of high severity. Parental qualitative supervision during critical hours of the day and the avoidance of smoking in the presence of children are indicated measures of prevention for unintentional cigarette poisoning

