

**UNINTENTIONAL CHILDHOOD POISONING IN THE “SHARON”
AREA IN ISRAEL.**

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Background: Unintentional poisoning is a major cause of morbidity in children worldwide, but the causes and risk factors for poisoning may vary among different cultures. Objectives: To study the epidemiology and risk factors for unintentional poisoning among the Jewish and the Arab population in the “Sharon” area in Israel. Methods: We prospectively evaluated visits to the pediatric emergency department due to unintentional poisoning, at the Meir General Hospital. We collected demographic data, substance exposure data, and the clinical outcome of the poisoning. Results: During the 5 years of the study 502 children were evaluated for unintentional poisoning, 84% Jewish and 16% Arabs. 88.5% occurred in children younger than 5 years of age, with a peak incidence at the age of two years (39.5%). Medications including hormones, vitamins and antibiotics were the most common cause of poisoning. Most children had no symptoms (95%) or abnormal findings on physical examination (84%), and most (85%) were discharged after several hours of observation. However, children of Arab origin presented with severe clinical manifestations, due to a high rate of pesticide poisoning. There was one death from organic phosphate poisoning. Conclusion: Poisoning is commonly encountered in children. Pesticides poisoning is more common in the Arab community and is usually associated with more severe clinical manifestations. Educational preventive programs are mandatory.