

## Outreach and Awareness Programme:

As a significant initiative, the Centre had earlier launched an Outreach Programme, as spin-off on a pilot project supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. The programme, themed "**BE CAUTIOUS, BE POISON SAFE**," aims to educate children, parents, and occupational workers about preventing poisonings from various substances. Further, to expand the horizons of the centre along with concentrating on community outreach, the centre conducted an awareness workshop on 'Prevention of poisoning' by inviting school children on 70<sup>th</sup> Institute Day Activities at AIIMS, New Delhi on 25th September 2025. The workshop emphasized on raising awareness and sensitize children under 12 years, about potential hazards from self-care and household products to prevent health issues at home and in daily life by engaging them in gaming cum awareness activities. Further, the centre envisages to expand its horizon by transforming digitally and replicating the outreach and awareness programme on 'Prevention of Poisoning', across all zones (North, South, East, West, North-east and Central) of the country with its state-wise implementation; capacity building; and announcement & implementation of 'National Poison Prevention Awareness Day' in our country.



A workshop towards 9th Ayurveda Day Celebration was conducted on the theme 'Ayurveda for Wellness at Schools' was organised on October 25, 2024, at MCD Primary School, Subhash Nagar, Block-9, New Delhi. The session focused on personal cleanliness, physical fitness, dental health, nutrition, and the awareness of potential hazards posed by certain self-care and household products to prevent health issues both at home and in daily life. A total of 209 students from various grades at the school took part in the workshop, showing great enthusiasm for the action-packed and activity-based learning. The program was highly successful, with the students expressing high levels of satisfaction and gratitude for the workshop. The school's principal, class coordinators, and other staff members also commended the initiative to raise awareness about wellness and poisoning among children, emphasizing the importance of spreading this awareness on a wider scale. The session was primarily conducted by a team: Dr. Swati Sharma, Scientist-I, and Dr. Jyoti, Scientist-I, Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS, New Delhi and Dr. Kartik Chadhar, Senior Resident, Community Medicine, Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital (VMVC & SJH), New Delhi, accompanied by Mr. Hariender Biduri, DEO at Department of Pharmacology, AIIMS, New Delhi.



Alongside, multiple awareness campaigns were conducted during the expansion initiation period by educating more than 3500 school children and their parents using gaming strategies through various platforms under the umbrella theme of NPIC 'Be Cautious, Be Poison Safe'. The first event of outreach and awareness was organized, by inviting school children under 12 years of age from Atal Adarsh Vidyalaya, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi on 70<sup>th</sup> Institute Day with title: A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE: WELLNESS IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE- "एम्स का संदेश" on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2025. The theme based "Ready, Set, Sort: Beat the Poison Challenge!" activity was conducted by engaging students in a group of 3. The children were shown the items in the form of non-toxic, children's friendly shuffled cubes having a poisonous or non-poisonous substance printed on them. The participating team were asked to pick the cubes one by one from the bag/box filled with mixed cubes (both poisonous and non-poisonous items) and decide whether it is safe or a poisonous substance. Later, they were asked to place them in the correct bin "Safe to Touch" representing Non-Poisonous substance or "Stay Away" representing Poisonous substance, which was confirmed by the facilitator. The Certificates of participation were given to the participating students and promotional goodies like Fridge Magnet and Mugs having NPIC helpline numbers printed on them were also distributed to them. The event was also covered by media in newspaper through an article in 'Time of India'.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/two-in-five-poisoning-cases-at-aiims-involved-kids-up-to-6-years-806-cases-from-delhi-ncr/articleshow/124129516.cms>.

## 2 in 5 poisoning emergency calls at AIIMS involve kids

Anuja Jaiswal  
@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Children under the age of six years are the most vulnerable when it comes to accidental poisoning. National Poisons Information Centre at AIIMS handled 6,197 poisoning calls in 2024 and more than 2,000 of them involved children aged up to six years — over two out of every five cases. Of the total calls, 806 were from Delhi and the rest of NCR.

The centre's helpline received 5,677 calls in 2022, which rose to 7,035 in 2023 before dipping to 6,047 in 2024. Doctors noted that the unusual spike in 2022 was largely driven by hand sanitiser poisoning during and after Covid-19.

"Out of 6,197 calls, 3,418 were accidental — mainly linked to household products and pesticides such as mosquito repellents and sprays, which 1,719 were intentional," Dr Swati Sharma, senior scientist at the department of pharmacology and nodal officer of the centre, said while

presenting the data at an exhibition on healthy lifestyle organised to mark the institute's 70th foundation day.

Prof DS Arya, head of the department and chief of the centre, said the umbrella theme for prevention is "be cautious and be poison-safe", which applies not only at home but also in workplaces, farms and industrial areas. "Poisoning can result from household products, medicines, narcotics, agricultural chemicals, plant products, animal bites and stings, and industrial agents," he said. "Simple steps can make a huge difference — store medicines and chemicals in locked cabinets, keep them out of children's reach and consume only safe food."

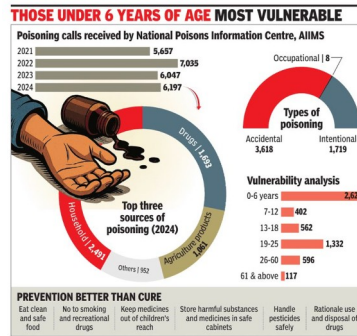
The nature of calls often changes with the season. "During Diwali, many cases involve paint thinners; during other festivals and pujas, children swallowing camphor is common. Around examination time, calls related to self-harm rise. Earlier, self-harm was seen in 14-15 years olds, but now it is being reported

even in children as young as 8-9 years due to various pressures, including academic stress," Dr Sharma said.

She also warned against harmful first-aid practices. "People often induce vomiting before contacting anyone, which is wrong. Especially when the poison is an acid, it can aspirate into the lungs and worsen the injury."

The centre, based in the pharmacology department, operates a 24x7 toll-free helpline to guide doctors and families nationwide in managing poisoning emergencies. Officials noted that most calls originated from southern states — Tamil Nadu, followed by Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka — possibly due to higher awareness about the service.

Officials said the centre would be upgraded into a national nodal agency with zonal satellite centres, participation in policy-making, creation of a national poisoning information registry and facilities for antidote development and analytical testing.



Another major event was organised in collaboration with Kukdukoo Fest held at JBM Global School, Sector 132 Noida, U.P. on 17-18th January, 2026 where the event features theatre, storytelling, art, puppetry, and a new games zone, aligning perfectly with fun, educational activities. The theme of NPIC event under 'Be Cautious, Be Poison Safe' was titled 'Tiny Heroes vs. Hidden Poisons: Unlock Safety Superpowers-Igniting Awareness in Young Minds'. The footfall on this event was more than 1500 attendees per day that includes children accompanied by their parents and grandparents (atleast 3 members per family) at NPIC stall. The overall footfall was more than 3000 as recorded through Participant's feedback stickers and maintaining attendance logs. The learning tool kits in the form of unique gaming activities were incorporated at the exhibit stall station, which comprises of the following:

- Educational learning tool kit comprises of comprehensive booklet on Poisoning prevention for both children and parents with fun 'look-a-like placards' and 'Tox-Trap Treasure Picnic – Kids "picnic" board game activity to uncover and safely store toxin traps, medicine over-dose danger and building label-reading skills.
- Gaming Adventures for Budding Safety Heroes: "Ready, Set, Sort: Beat the Poison Challenge!" (using non-toxic props, aligning with Kukdukoo festival safety tips)



