

Study estimates prevalence of pediatric caustic ingestion injuries

December 17 2012

The annual economic burden of pediatric caustic ingestion injuries was estimated at nearly \$23 million with an estimated prevalence of injuries requiring hospitalization for 807 children in 2009, according to a report in the December issue of *Archives of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery*, a JAMA Network publication.

Although not well documented, the prevalence of caustic ingestion injuries appears to have decreased over the years through legislative measures, including requiring the labeling of caustic substances such as lye. Having epidemiologic data is necessary to analyze the effect of legislative measures and to investigate national trends and variations to develop new prevention strategies, according to the study background.

Christopher M. Johnson, M.D., and Matthew T. Brigger, M.D., M.P.H., of the Naval Medical Center, San Diego, used the 2009 Kids' Inpatient Database to generate national estimates of the public health burden related to caustic injury. The authors estimated that the prevalence of pediatric caustic ingestion injuries requiring hospitalization in 2009 to be 807 children.

"Based on the weighted estimate, the prevalence of pediatric caustic ingestion injuries in the United States during 2009 appears to be much lower than the figure widely stated in the literature. The finding of a decreased prevalence of caustic injuries makes sense given the public health interventions currently in place," the authors comment.

The authors note that children with caustic ingestion injuries were estimated to incur [hospital](#) charges of nearly \$23 million and account for more than 3,300 inpatient days.

"Further investigation is necessary to better define specific populations and to identify opportunities for targeted [public health](#) intervention," the authors conclude.

More information: *Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.*
2012;138[12]:1111-1115

Provided by JAMA and Archives Journals

Citation: Study estimates prevalence of pediatric caustic ingestion injuries (2012, December 17)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-prevalence-pediatric-caustic-ingestion-injuries.html>

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