Recent increase seen in pediatric benzonatate exposure

November 15 2022

Pediatric benzonatate prescription utilization has increased recently, as

have cases involving intentional benzonatate exposure, according to a study published online Nov. 15 in *Pediatrics*.

Ivone Kim, M.D., from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in Silver Spring, Maryland, and colleagues conducted a retrospective analysis of data to examine recent trends in benzonatate exposure (2012 to 2019) and the clinical consequences for pediatric patients.

The researchers observed an increase in pediatric benzonatate prescription utilization during the study period, but it remained low compared with pediatric utilization of dextromethorphan-containing prescription antitussive medications. Eighty percent of the 4,689 pediatric benzonatate exposure cases reported to U.S. poison control centers in 2010 to 2018 were for single-substance exposures; 77 percent were unintentional exposures.

Most of these cases (2,718 cases; 83 percent) involved children aged 0 to 5 years. There was an increase seen in cases involving intentional benzonatate exposure among children aged 10 to 16 years, with a more pronounced increase for multiple-substance exposures. Children aged 10 to 16 years accounted for 61 percent of benzonatate cases involving misuse or abuse. A low proportion of cases had serious adverse effects; among children, few cases of serious adverse events with benzonatate were seen annually.

"Anticipatory guidance at the time of benzonatate prescribing should include discussions with patients and caregivers about keeping benzonatate out of reach of children to avoid unintentional ingestions in younger children and potential misuse and use for suicide attempts by older children," the authors write.

More information: Abstract/Full Text (subscription or payment may be required)