

COVID-19: home poisoning throughout the containment period

The world is facing a major pandemic situation, with more than 2 million confirmed cases and 139 000 related deaths, as of April 18, 2020.¹ Although health systems have to deal with such disasters to decrease massive contaminations, several countries, such as France, have implemented containment measures.^{2,3} Poison control centres are—perhaps unexpectedly—being involved too in the COVID-19 outbreak as they are observing a change in the typology of the calls they receive, which is directly related to containment measures.

Indeed, disproportionate fear of the coronavirus leads to dramatic behaviour modification, such as excessive house cleaning and misuse of cleaning products for personal hygiene or for food cleaning. Consequently, we are witnessing an increase in the number of exposures to the chlorine that results from mixing bleach with other cleaning products.⁴

With school closures, young children at home are thus more frequently exposed to dangerous—although common—substances including parent medication, hydroalcoholic solution, potentially poisonous plants, and homemade products. Moreover, hazardous self-medication attempts to fight coronavirus also lead to their fair share of domestic accidents, such as essential oil poisoning, daily treatment cutoff, or, conversely, unproven medication use.

Lastly, and in addition to the containment measures, we must also acknowledge that fear of being contaminated in the emergency room is another obstacle for many people who need health care after poisoning.

Worldwide, prevention of such home poisonings is urgently needed to avoid unnecessary emergency medical system use in such critical times. Once this crisis ends, it will be important

that poison centres, and health and safety agencies, provide exact figures and consider what lessons can be drawn for the future.

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