

National Poisons Information Centre in Poland - role and tasks.

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Abstract: The National Poisons Information Centre was established in Poland in 1967 by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The Centre is located at the Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, 8 Św. Teresy Str., Łódź, Poland. The Centre prepares and disseminates information and materials helpful in treating patients poisoned with toxic agents; those materials are also helpful in preventing poisonings in the communal, municipal and household environments. The staff of the Centre and physicians of the Acute Poisonings Department run a telephone toxicological information service. The tasks of the National Poisons Information Centre are:

- to provide an information service to medical practitioners on the identification of chemical substances, their toxic effects, first aid, and treatment of acute poisoning cases;
- to provide information for chemical safety services, work safety and hygiene units and also for the general public;
- to make a computerized database of common chemical substances (such as medicines, pesticides, household products - now our database has 33,500 chemicals and about 300,000 items) containing information on chemical composition, toxicity, and treatment of acute poisoning cases and collecting information about new common products which are on the Polish market;
- to collect and analyse information about all patients who are treated in poisoning units and toxicological departments in Poland;
- to prepare and edit information materials such as posters, brochures, etc. to prevent acute poisonings.

The staff of the National Poisons Information Centre run a phone information service to medical units, work safety and hygiene units, chemical safety and fire services, and to the general public from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. From 4.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. the information is available from the physicians employed at the Acute Poisonings Department, Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine. A record is made of all outgoing information, and these records are stored in a file of the National Poisons Information Centre. **Summary:** The National Poisons Information Centre, together with the physicians employed at the Acute Poisonings Department run a 24-h telephone information service. The Centre performs an essential educational and training function in Poland in the field of acute poisonings problems. By making available its own information materials to regional toxicological centres, the National Poisons Information Centre enables the operation of a uniform nationwide toxicological information system in Poland.