



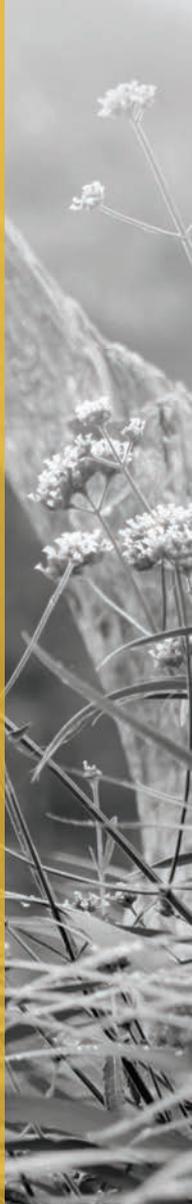
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**CAROLINAS  
POISON CENTER**

**BIENNIAL REPORT**  
2014 | 2015

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**POISON**  
**Help**  
1-800-222-1222





# 55 Poison Control Centers ACROSS THE NATION

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**1** Nationwide Number  
to connect you to the  
Poison Control Center  
**SERVING YOU**

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**1** Poison Control Center  
SERVING ALL OF  
**NORTH CAROLINA**



## WHO WE ARE:

Carolinas Poison Center is the poison control center serving all of North Carolina. You can reach us by calling **1-800-222-1222**. Calls are free and confidential. Nurses and pharmacists – not dispatchers or operators – answer the phone, which means you're receiving immediate, expert medical advice when you call.

In 2014 and 2015, Carolinas Poison Center took **164,433 calls** from people just like you. Of these calls, the center was able to keep nearly three out of every four calls at home preventing a costly emergency department or urgent care visit. Now that's savings!

**In fact, Carolinas Poison Center is estimated to save an average of 11.5 million dollars in medical costs every year.**



## WHY NOT 911?

Sometimes Carolinas Poison Center and 911 work together to get a poisoned patient the treatment he or she needs, but not all poisonings require hospital care. In fact, over two thirds of people who contact us don't need any additional care. We treat and follow up with people right where they're calling from – for free. In most cases, this can save an unnecessary trip to the Emergency Department.

**911 dispatches police officers, medics or fire fighters to a location, but 911 operators do not treat poisoning exposures.**

Carolinas Poison Center actively manages poison exposures where they happen.

Our highly trained nurses, pharmacists, and doctors can provide immediate advice for poisonings and can determine whether a person needs hospital care. Should additional care be needed, we can alert your healthcare facility and provide information that will prepare for a patient's arrival, so that care can continue.

Here are some tips that can help you decide when to call a poison control center and **WHEN TO CALL 911:**

**Call Carolinas Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 if someone has...**



Eaten, swallowed, tasted, touched, or inhaled something you think might be poisonous



Been bitten by a snake, aquatic animal, spider, or other insect



A question about a poison

**Call 911 if someone has...**



Collapsed



Had a seizure



Experienced chest pains



Stopped breathing and/or become unconscious

# TOP 5 SUBSTANCES Carolinas Poison Center IS CALLED ABOUT

Children and adults often become poisoned by different substances. Identifying the substances that impact each age group can help minimize poisonings. Often people think that the risk for poisoning decreases if there are no children in the home. However, adults 20 and over make up 9 out of 10 poisoning deaths across the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Here are the top 5 substances that prompt a call to the poison center for both adults and children:

## CHILDREN:

1. Cosmetics and personal care products (like toothpaste, sanitizer, and deodorant)
2. Household cleaning products
3. Over-the-counter and prescription pain relievers
4. Foreign objects (like silica gel packs, glow sticks, and coins)
5. Allergy medicines

## ADULTS:

1. Over-the-counter and prescription pain relievers
2. Anxiety medications, sedatives, and sleep aids
3. Heart and blood pressure medicines
4. Antidepressants
5. Alcohols

<sup>1</sup> 2014 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System (NPDS)

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*A woman in her 60's called to find out when it was safe to take a second dose of her Rx medicine. Carolinas Poison Center was there to help:*

*"Thanks for understanding. You gave some great advice."*

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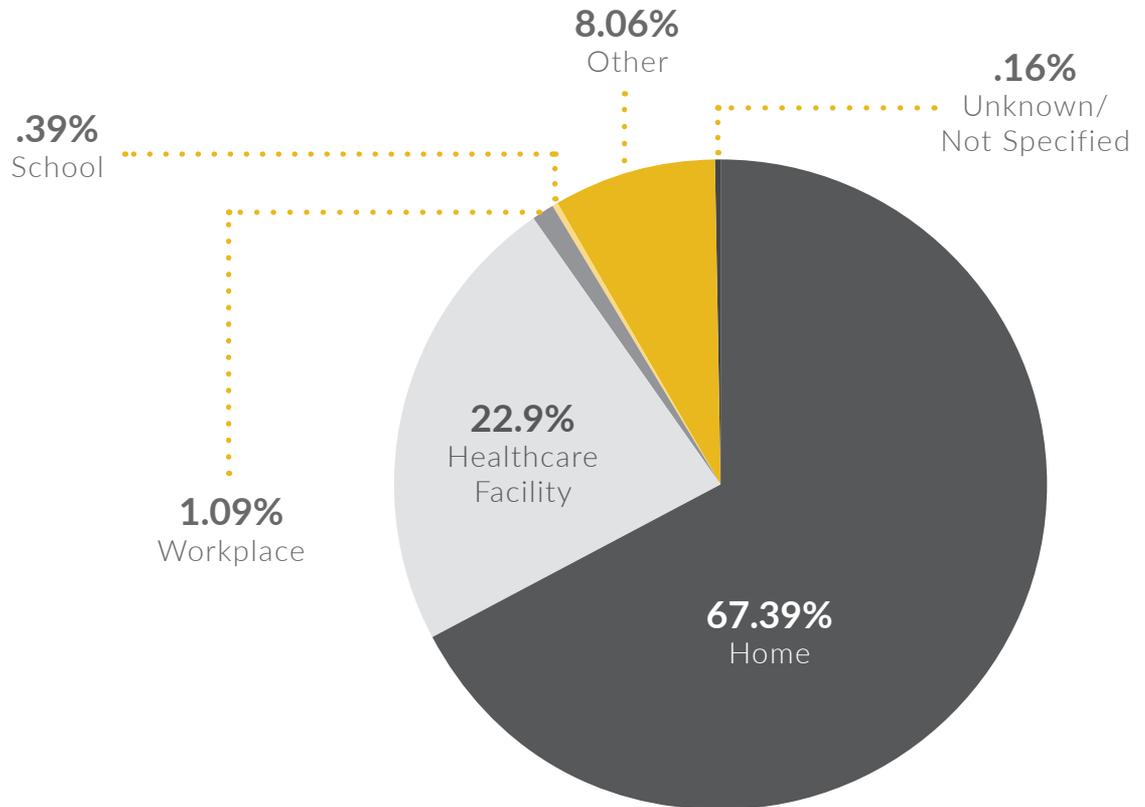
**67%** of calls  
to the  
Poison Center  
are because of  
exposures that  
happen at home

.....



# CALLER SITE

## Human Exposures



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## Types of Calls WE RECEIVE

People of all ages need help from the poison center because people of all ages become exposed to potentially poisonous substances. A poisoning may be more likely to happen than you might think. Here are a few examples of the types of calls we get and the types of people we help:

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**A 4-year-old** who swallowed a mouthful of colorful mouthwash



**A doctor** calling because a 16-year-old took all the pills in a bottle of acetaminophen in an attempt to end her life

**A 63-year-old** having side effects from taking her anti-anxiety medication



**A parent** who accidentally gave a double dose of a fever reducer to her toddler

**A toddler** who was stung on the foot by a jellyfish as she was walking along the beach



**A 3-year-old** who swallowed several aspirin found on a nightstand

The **friend of a 25-year-old** who mixed an illegal drug with large doses of an antidepressant



**An 18-month-old** who put an ink stamp in her mouth

**A 48-year-old** who accidentally got splashed in the eye with gasoline at his workplace



**A daycare employee** calling to see if azaleas are toxic to children

**A 76-year old** who brushed his teeth with an anti-itch cream instead of toothpaste



**A 44-year-old** who took a pain pill prescribed years ago with her sleeping medication to help her back pain

# NOT JUST FOR EMERGENCIES

Over 80% of our calls are from people who need help treating a poisoning, but you don't have to wait for an emergency to call Carolinas Poison Center. Many of our calls are from people looking for information about a product or pill. Sometimes, people call in search of poison prevention information for themselves, a family member, or friend.

Here are the number of exposure and information calls we took in 2014/2015:

<b>Exposures to poisonous or potentially poisonous substances:</b>	<b>134,569</b>
<b>Drug Identification/Information:</b>	<b>20,344</b>
<b>Poison/Medical Information:</b>	<b>2,517</b>
<b>Environmental/Occupational Information:</b>	<b>1,032</b>



## Exposure Route

Number of Exposures

Ingestion	112,825
Dermal	9,360
Inhalation/Nasal	8,566
Ocular	5,093
Bite/Sting	3,088
Other	2,086

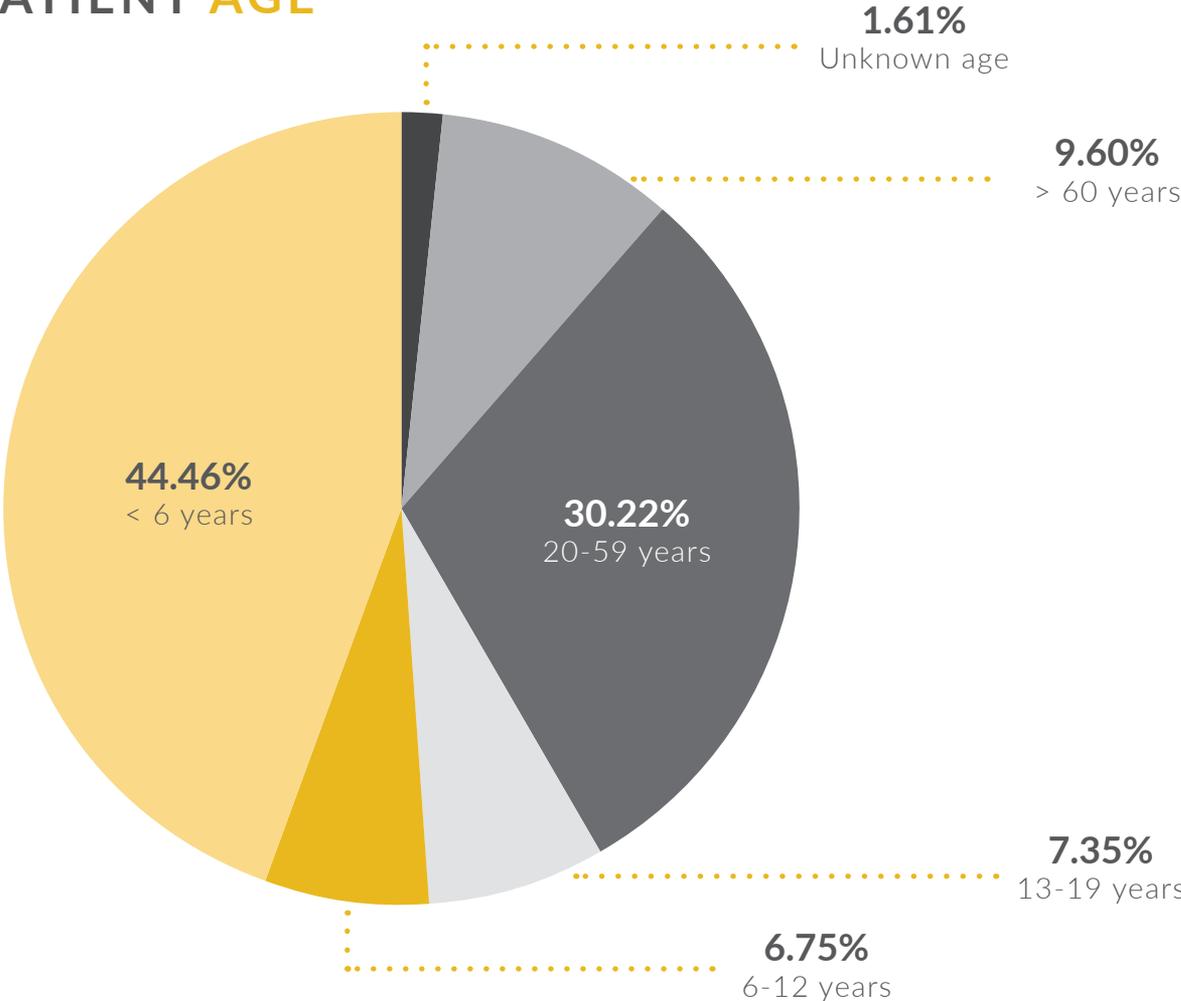
Sometimes exposures occur by more than one route.

# REASON For Exposure

UNINTENTIONAL/ACCIDENTAL		
General	44.84%	77.55%
Environmental	3.19%	
Occupational	1.38%	
Therapeutic Error	16.08%	
Misuse	8.43%	
Bite/Sting	2.29%	
Food Poisoning	1.26%	
Unknown	.08%	
INTENTIONAL		
Suspected Suicide	11.09%	16.99%
Misuse	2.75%	
Abuse	2.15%	
Unknown	1.00%	
OTHER		
Contamination/Tampering/Malicious	1.16%	2.60%
Unknown/Missing	1.34%	
Withdrawal	.10%	
ADVERSE REACTION		
Drug	2.12%	2.85%
Food	.23%	
Other	.51%	
TOTAL		100%

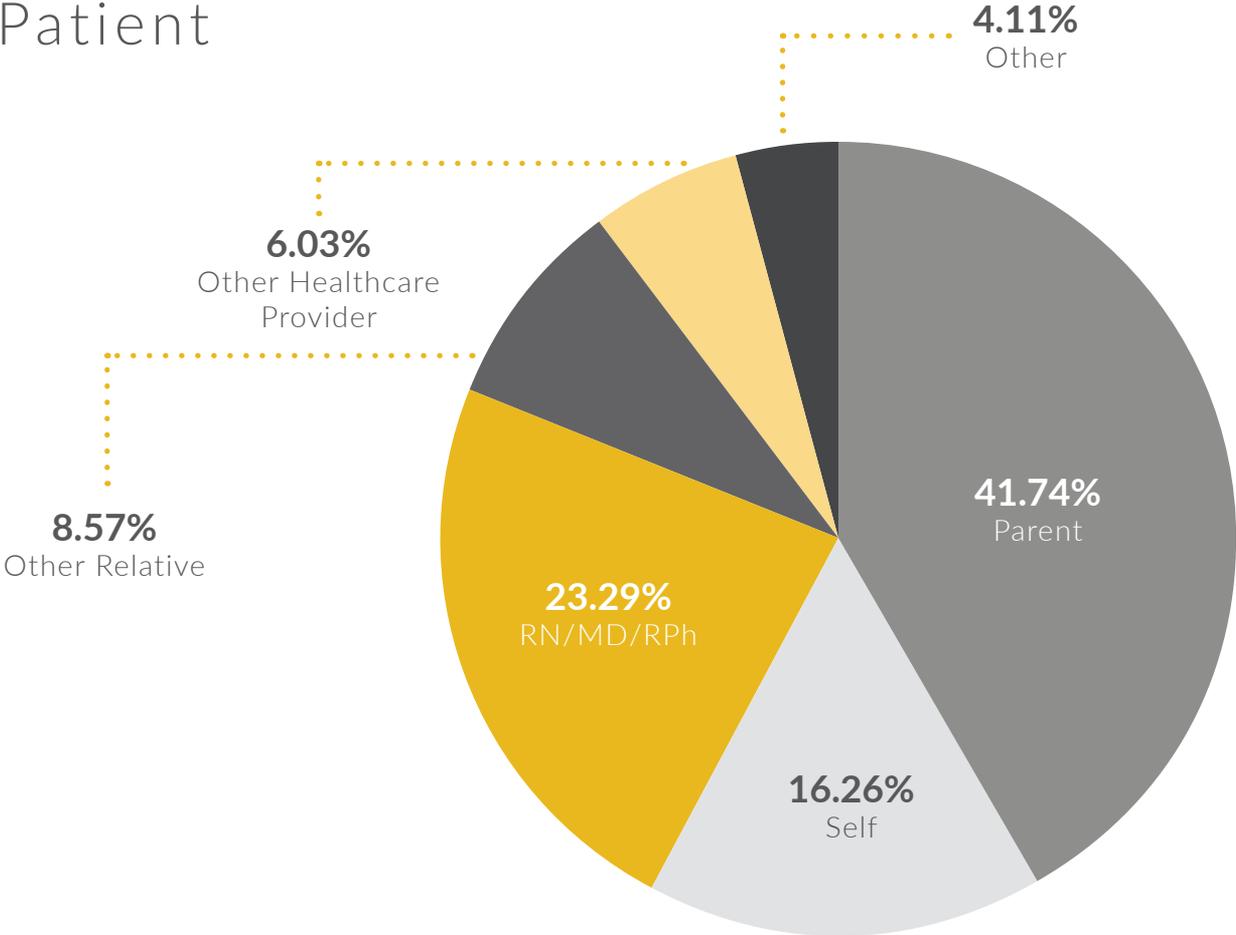


# PATIENT AGE

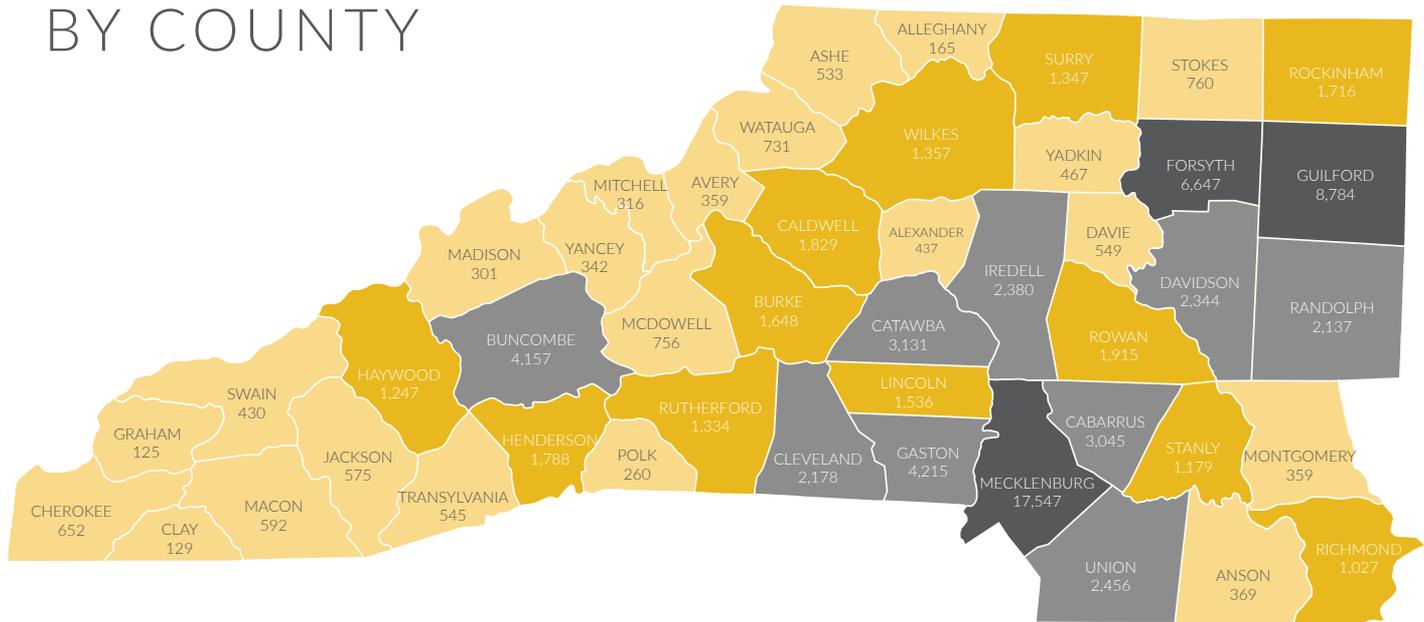


# CALLER'S RELATIONSHIP

## To Patient

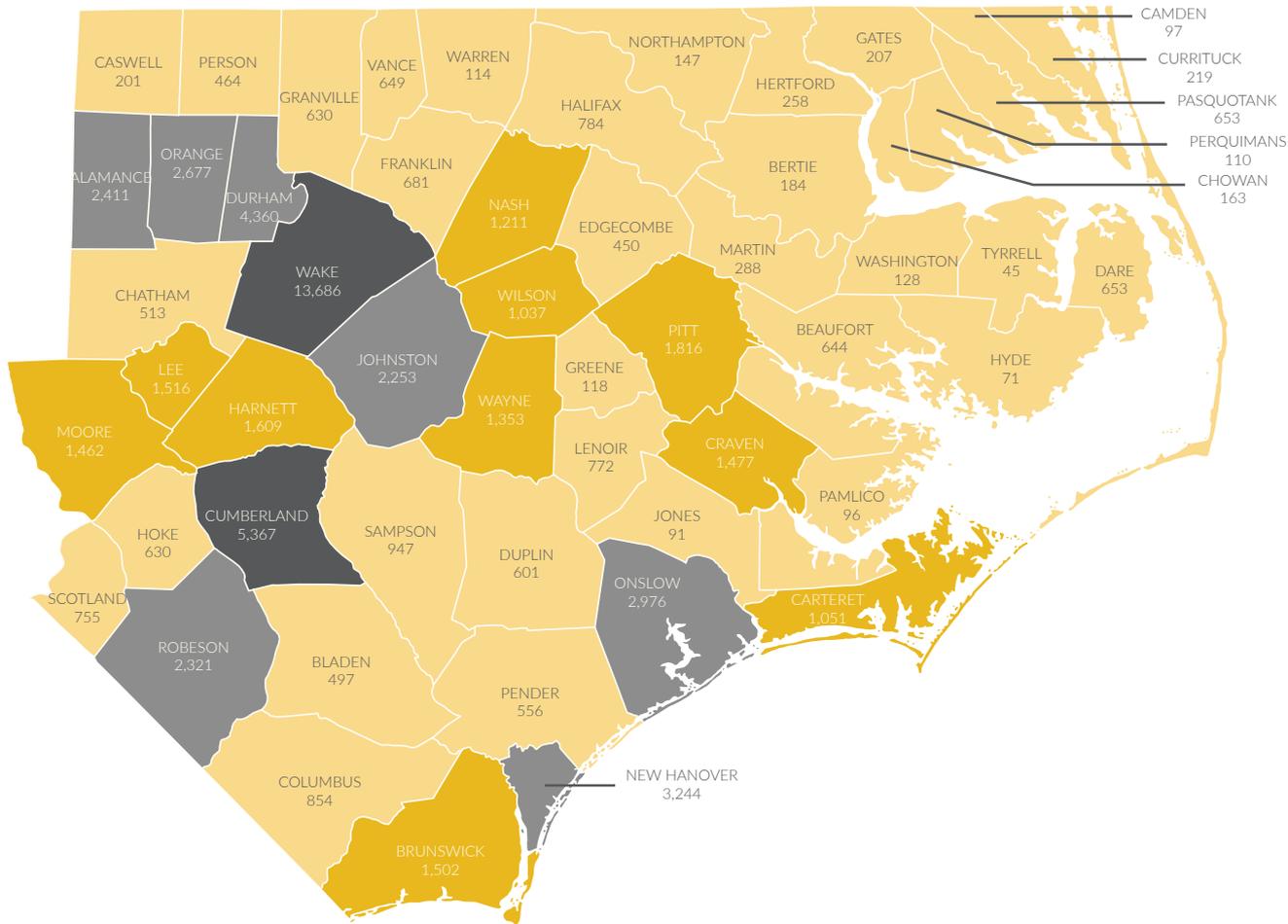


# CALL VOLUME BY COUNTY

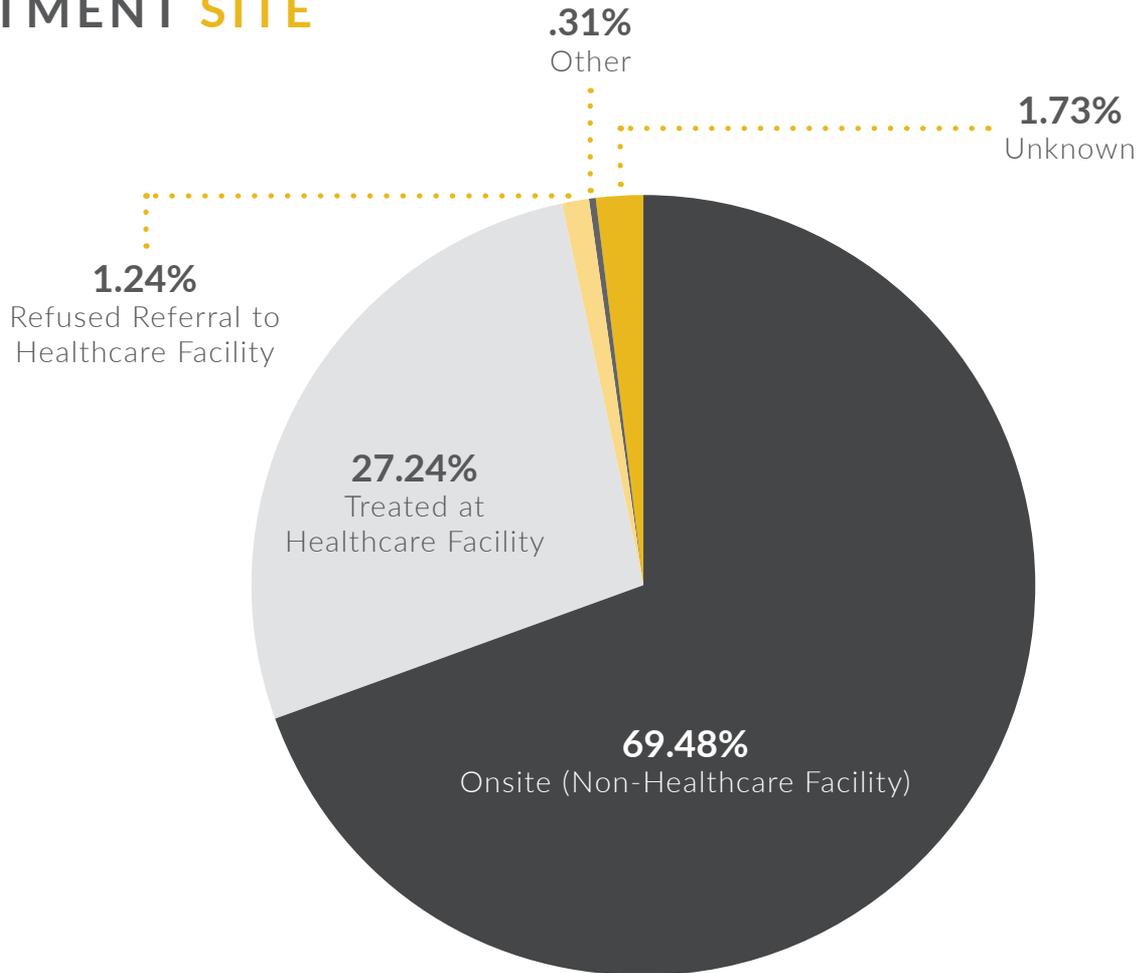


- 0 - 1,000 calls
- 1,001 - 2,000 calls
- 2,001 - 5,000 calls
- 5,001 - 25,000 calls

662 calls from an unknown county



# TREATMENT SITE





# PATIENT'S MEDICAL OUTCOME

Outcomes	Number of Cases
No effect	13,518
Minor or Moderate effect	31,023
Major effect	2,021
Death	190

Includes cases followed to a known outcome.



## SPOTLIGHT ON POISONINGS: Snake Bites

Many people know to call the poison center for a run-in with a chemical or if a medicine is taken incorrectly, but did you know that Carolinas Poison Center can also help someone who's been bitten by a snake? That's because snake venom is a poison to the body.

The nurses and pharmacists who answer the phones at the poison center are experts in handling how poisons interact in the body. There are also medical and clinical toxicologists on staff (MDs/PharmDs) to help manage severe exposures.

# 986 CALLS about Poisonous Snake Bites

In 2014 and 2015, Carolinas Poison Center took 986 calls about poisonous snake bites. In 2015, the center created a snake brochure and poster (pictured right) in an effort to help the public know more about...

- Venomous snakes native to North Carolina.
- The proper first aid steps to immediately treat a bite.
- How Carolinas Poison Center can help in the event of a snake bite.
- Whether emergency care at a hospital is needed.

## The Poisonous Snakes of North Carolina

presented by Carolinas Poison Center  
Call Carolinas Poison Center if you are bitten by a snake: 1-800-222-1222

### Venomous vs. Poisonous: What's the difference?

The short answer is that all venomous animals are poisonous! This is the reason people call poison control centers to help with bites and stings.

**Venomous** is a specific word indicating that an animal has a venom gland and a way to introduce the venom (a poisonous liquid).

**Poisonous** is a more general word indicating that a substance harmful can be harmful to a person's organs or tissues.

**Venomous and poisonous** are sometimes interchangeable when talking about snakes with venom. While venomous is the more precise term, both terms are accurate.

### How many snakes with venom live in North Carolina?

There are six snakes with venom that live in North Carolina:

- copperhead
- eastern diamond-back
- cottonmouth
- timber rattlesnake
- pigmy rattlesnake
- coral snake rattlesnake

This poster only features the four live, because the coral snake is so rare in North Carolina. In fact, the Carolinas Poison Center hasn't had a call about a coral snake bite in over 20 years.

### Which venomous snake is most common in North Carolina?

The copperhead is the most common venomous snake in North Carolina. The Carolinas Poison Center receives 10 times the number of calls about copperhead bites than all other snake bites combined.

### Why call Carolinas Poison Center for a snake bite?

Carolinas Poison Center is the poison control center serving all of North Carolina. Here's why you should call us:

- Snake bites are potentially, and treating poisonings is our job.
- Nurses, doctors, and pharmacists specializing handle the calls.
- Our specialists have years of experience and helping manage snake bites.
- Other doctors and nurses call us to help treat their snake bite patients.

To order a free snake pack from Carolinas Poison Center, visit [www.PoisonHelp.org](http://www.PoisonHelp.org). For more information about snake identification, visit [www.hugobone.org](http://www.hugobone.org).

Carolinas HealthCare System

Call Carolinas Poison Center anytime for help with snake bites:  
**1-800-222-1222**  
Program the number into your phone for quick and easy access.

Carolinas Poison Center Snake Bite Poster

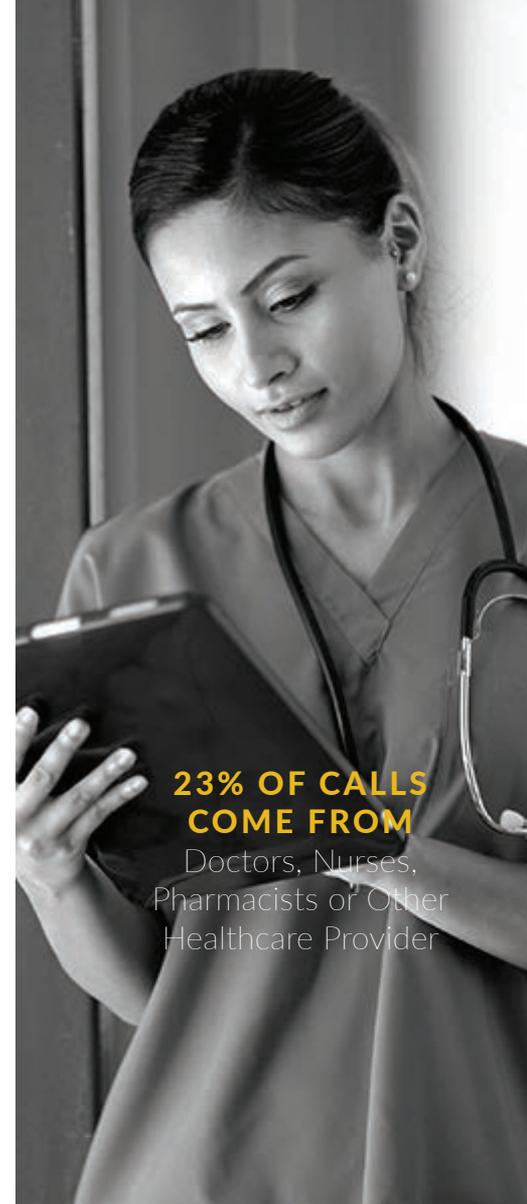
## HELPING Other Doctors and Nurses

**Who does your doctor turn to when he or she needs advice to manage a poisoning?** Carolinas Poison Center. Board certified-toxicologists staff the center, along with the specially trained nurses and pharmacists who answer the phones. Many hospitals don't have toxicologists on site, so they rely on the expert advice of Carolinas Poison Center nurses, pharmacists, and doctors for help.

In fact, twenty-three percent of our calls come from healthcare providers. This number has steadily increased over the last several years due to the increasing complexity of poisonings from things like emerging drugs of abuse and the multiple medications people take.

In addition, poison centers offer specialized training for pharmacists, fellows, and other medical professionals to prepare the next generation of toxicologists.

Often, when people call their doctor's office, nurse line, or visit a healthcare facility in person for help with a poisoning, the medical professionals at those sites call the poison center for treatment advice. You may be able to save a step by calling Carolinas Poison Center first. Call anytime at **1-800-222-1222**.



**23% OF CALLS  
COME FROM**  
Doctors, Nurses,  
Pharmacists or Other  
Healthcare Provider

# PROTECTING Public Health

Carolinas Poison Center is on the frontlines of public health surveillance across the state. Because we take calls from all 100 counties throughout North Carolina, we can quickly detect any poisoning trend or outbreak.

For example, the Carolinas Poison Center participated in two major statewide surveillance efforts in 2014/2015: staffing the Ebola hotline in North Carolina and training for a flu pandemic.

Carolinas Poison Center uploads data in real-time to the North Carolina Disease Event Tracking and Epidemiologic Collection Tool (NC DETECT) assisting epidemiologists addressing the problem of poisonings. Carolinas Poison Center, along with the other poison centers across the country, uploads de-identified data to the National Poison Data System (NPDS) in order to create a national picture of poisoning exposures.



# Preventing Poisonings

While many people know that the poison control center helps with poison emergencies, what they may not know is that Carolinas Poison Center can provide information to prevent poisonings, too.

We provide free poison prevention packs to anyone in North Carolina who requests one, and we offer about 30 different educational items or resources that can help individuals, families, and communities prevent poisonings. Ordering materials is as easy as visiting our online store, **www.PoisonShop.org**.

In 2014 and 2015, we received 760 orders and distributed over 250,000 pieces of education material.

## Top 5 Items Distributed in 2014/2015:

1. Poison Help Magnet
2. Program the Number Sticker
3. Poison Safety Brochure
4. Teen Rack Card
5. Mini Magnet



Poison Help Sticker



Teen Rack Card



**CAROLINAS POISON CENTER**  
serving all of North Carolina

[www.NCPoisonCenter.org](http://www.NCPoisonCenter.org)

**1-800-222-1222**



Carolinan HealthCare System