

NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN)

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Reports of Severe Illness Associated with Use of Products Containing Ivermectin to Prevent or Treat COVID-19 and Ivermectin Toxicity Reporting to New Mexico Poison and Drug Information Center

September 10th, 2021

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) in collaboration with the New Mexico Poison and Drug Information Center is monitoring cases of ivermectin toxicity among persons presenting to a healthcare setting including emergency departments and hospital admissions. **All suspect cases should be reported to the Poison Control Center by calling 1-800-222-1222. Suspected drug toxicity-related overdose deaths should be reported to the Office of the Medical Examiner per 7.3.2.10 NMAC. Medical providers may notify the Office of the Medical Examiner of a reportable death by calling 505-272-3053 and selecting option 2.**

Background:

Ivermectin is a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved prescription medication used to treat certain infections caused by internal and external parasites. When used as prescribed for approved indications, it is generally safe and well tolerated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ivermectin dispensing by retail pharmacies has increased, as has use of veterinary formulations available over the counter but not intended for human use. FDA has cautioned about the potential risks of use for prevention or treatment of COVID-19.

Ivermectin is not authorized or approved by FDA for prevention or treatment of COVID-19. The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines Panel has also determined that there are currently insufficient data to recommend ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19. [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) has listings of ongoing clinical trials that might provide more information about these hypothesized uses in the future. Adverse effects associated with ivermectin misuse and overdose are increasing, as shown by a rise in calls to poison control centers reporting overdoses and more people experiencing adverse effects.

In 2021, poison control centers across the U.S. received a three-fold increase in the number of calls for human exposures to ivermectin in January 2021 compared to the pre-pandemic baseline. In some cases, people have ingested ivermectin-containing products purchased without a prescription, including topical formulations and veterinary products. Veterinary formulations intended for use in large animals such as horses, sheep, and cattle (e.g., "sheep drench," injection formulations, and "pour-on" products for cattle) can be highly concentrated and result in overdoses when used by humans. Animal products may also contain inactive ingredients that have not been evaluated for use in humans. People who take inappropriately high doses of ivermectin above FDA-recommended dosing may experience toxic effects.

EPIDEMIOLOGY AND RESPONSE

Clinical effects of ivermectin overdose include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Overdoses are associated with hypotension and neurologic effects such as decreased consciousness, confusion, hallucinations, seizures, coma, and death. Ivermectin may potentiate the effects of other drugs that cause central nervous system depression such as benzodiazepines and barbiturates.

Recommendations for Clinicians and Public Health Practitioners

- Be aware that ivermectin is not currently authorized or approved by FDA for treatment of COVID-19. NIH has also determined that there are currently insufficient data to recommend ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19.
- Educate patients about the risks of using ivermectin without a prescription, or ingesting ivermectin formulations that are meant for external use or ivermectin-containing products formulated for veterinary use.
- Advise patients to immediately seek medical treatment if they have taken any ivermectin or ivermectin-containing products and are experiencing symptoms. Signs and symptoms of ivermectin toxicity include gastrointestinal effects (nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and diarrhea), headache, blurred vision, dizziness, tachycardia, hypotension, visual hallucinations, altered mental status, confusion, loss of coordination and balance, central nervous system depression, and seizures. Ivermectin may increase sedative effects of other medications such as benzodiazepines and barbiturates. **Call the poison control center hotline (1-800-222-1222) for medical management advice and to report suspect cases.**
- Educate patients and the public to get vaccinated against COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination is safe and the most effective means to prevent infection and protect against severe disease and death from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, including the Delta variant.
- Educate patients and the public to use COVID-19 prevention measures including wearing masks in indoor public places, physical distancing by staying at least six feet from other people who don't live in the same household, avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces, and frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

For additional information:

[NMDOH - Coronavirus Updates | Coronavirus Updates in New Mexico \(nmhealth.org\)](https://www.nmhealth.org/coronavirus)

[HAN Archive - 00449 | Health Alert Network \(HAN\) \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/han/)

<https://nmpoisoncenter.unm.edu/>

[What is a Reportable Death? \(unm.edu\)](https://www.unm.edu/what-is-a-reportable-death/)

[NIH COVID-19 Treatment Ivermectin Guidelines](https://www.nih.gov/covid-19-treatment-ivermectin-guidelines)

[FDA Consumer Alert on Use of Ivermectin to Treat or Prevent COVID-19](https://www.fda.gov/consumer/alerts/ucma20200723)

[FDA MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program](https://www.fda.gov/medwatch)

[American Association of Poison Control Centers](https://www.aapcc.org/)

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the New Mexico Health Alert Network, go to <https://member.everbridge.net/index/453003085613008#/login> and click “Sign Up” at the bottom of the page. Provide all information on each screen, click on “Save and Continue,” and click on “Finish” at the end to begin receiving important health alerts and advisories.