

Poisoning

Author: Dr Didier Palmer (Director, RDH ED)

Topic Reviewers: Kenna Bistani (RAN, Pine Creek); Bernard Egan (RAN, Bulman Clinic)

The vast majority of poisoning requires conservative management with attention to the ABCDs, fitting, and management of the unconscious patient. After the immediate event a psychosocial evaluation is generally required.

The management of poisoning has seen some significant changes in the past 10 years with a move to less intervention. For example, gastric emptying is rarely used and induced emesis (with ipecac) is never used, in fact ipecac is no longer available in Australia. Activated charcoal also has a decreasing role.

The 24-hour availability of poison information lines for giving high quality advice on all aspects of care (seriousness of poisoning, what to look out for, required period and type of observation, necessity of decontamination, specific treatment etc.) removes the need for any detailed discussion of toxicology in this manual.