

**General Circular:**

**All Provincial Secretaries of Health,  
All Provincial / Deputy Provincial Directors of Health,  
All Directors of Teaching Hospitals,  
All Heads of Institutions.**

**NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK – 21<sup>st</sup> TO 27<sup>th</sup> OF OCTOBER 2017**

**“PREVENT POISONOUS ANIMAL BITES & STINGS”**

National Poison Information Center has been annually conducting the poison prevention week for the last few years. This national health program has been educating public and health staff regarding preventing poisoning and the treatment available for poisonous agents.

Sri Lanka, has one of the highest snakebite rates in the world, around 33,000 envenomed snake bite victims are reported annually from government hospitals. About 95% of the mortality associated with snakebites are due to the highly venomous cobra, Russell's viper and kraits. Hump-nosed viper, accounted for about 27% of all snakebites in Sri Lanka. According to the Annual Medical Statistics in 2015, there were 36631 patients being hospitalized due to snake bites and 78 patients have died. Majority of snake bites have been reported from the Districts of Kurunegala, Puttlam, Polonnaruwa, Badulla, Monaragala, Rathnapura and Kegalle respectively.

In addition, national survey done by National Poisons Information Centre in 2014, there had been 94 cases due to sea animal envenomation. Majority of cases have been reported from coastal areas of Jaffna district. Apart from that similar incidents have been reported from Puttlam, Galle and Colombo coastal areas.

According to another survey conducted by National Poisons Information Centre in 2014, there had been 1231 persons hospitalized due to wasps and hornets bites. Majority were reported from Nuwara Eliya district and significant number of cases have also been reported from Kandy, Polonnaruwa, Vavuniya and Anuradhapura Districts.

Apart from these poisonous animal bites, Scorpions, Centipedes and other insect bites are also clinically important. Recently there had been significant number of deaths reported from Jaffna peninsula due to red scorpion bites.

According to national health statistics at present, snake bites are the commonest cause due to reported admissions among the poisonous animal bites.

Considering these factors it is important to establish comprehensive National programme in order to minimize the hospitalizations and deaths due to poisonous animal bites in general.

In order to achieve this target National Poisons Information Centre has planned a programme during the poison prevention week according to the decision taken by the National injury prevention committee.

**Scheduled dates:** 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017

**Theme:** “Prevent poisonous animal bites & stings”

Activities planned for this year's event are as follows:

**Objectives:**

1. Minimize hospitalizations and deaths due to poisonous animal bites
2. Aware all the relevant authorities in order to achieve these activities of National Poisons Information Centre during the week
3. To establish an action plan in collaboration with relevant Authorities
4. Educating the general public regarding the importance and how to minimize the poisonous animal bites

**The Proposed Activities:**

1. Preparing an action plan to aware and educate the staff and General public at institutional and public level Ex. Health educational lectures , Exhibitions and distributing of handouts and posters
2. Taking advice and proposals from various categories involved in participating and sponsoring the activities of poison information centre
3. Conducting island wide programmes in order to educate and aware the General public according to the circular
4. During the poison prevention week, displaying a suitable banner in the institution.

At least one programme should be conducted in this regards at MOH, DMOH, Central Hospital and Teaching Hospital level. You may seek further information and technical support from the National Poisons Information Centre located at the NHSL/Colombo (Tel: 011-2686143/011-2691111 ext. 2430) who will be coordinating this activity.

Please bring this circular to the notice of all members of the staff and ensure that the above measures are implemented. The report of activities conducted in your respective institution should be forwarded to the National Poisons Information Centre and the Director/ Non Communicable Disease, Ministry of Health, on or before 31<sup>st</sup> November 2017.

The above activities may be carried out throughout the month of October 2017.

**Janaka Sugathadasa**  
**Secretary**  
**Ministry of Health & Nutrition & Indigenous Medicine**