

Frequently Asked Questions

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The German Poisoning Registry– Collecting data, saving lives

The Fourth Act Amending the German Chemicals Act (Federal Law Gazette 2023 I No. 313) stipulated the establishment of a central poisoning registry at the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR). The registry is intended to collate and evaluate data on poisoning cases from all German Poison Centres together with that of the BfR.

The establishment of the German Poisoning Registry (DVR) will provide the first overview of poisoning incidents in Germany. This will enable the BfR to provide much better information on health risks associated with the handling of hazardous substances, mixtures or products.

What is the German Poisoning Registry?

The German Poisoning Registry is a central database that brings together reports of poisoning from the Poison Centres of the German federal states in Germany, the professional associations and medical communications. This makes the data available for evaluation. The aim is to obtain an overview of national poisoning incidents in Germany.

When will the German Poisoning Registry start?

The registry will start in January 2026. From this date onwards, data on poisoning cases will be transmitted to the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) in electronic form via certain transmission channels. Through targeted evaluations of this data, the registry will help to better protect the health of consumers and, in the best case scenario, save lives.

What exactly is recorded in the German Poisoning Registry?

The registry basically records all cases of poisoning by substances. This includes not only chemical products, but also poisoning of natural origin, whether solid, liquid or gaseous. In addition to the substance responsible for the poisoning, the associated product and the type of intake are also recorded, i.e. whether the substance was swallowed or inhaled, for example. The severity of the poisoning is also recorded. In addition, the age group and gender are documented. This is precisely regulated in § 16g-j of the German Chemicals Act.

What does the German Poisoning Registry not record?

The information recorded on poisoning cases depends on who reports the poisoning case. The German Chemicals Act (ChemG) distinguishes between poison centres (reports pursuant to Section 16i ChemG) and doctors who report pursuant to Section 16e ChemG.

For reports submitted by Poison Centres, it is set that cases of poisoning involving medicines, narcotics, veterinary medicines and alcoholic beverages are not to be recorded in the registry. This is specified in Section 2(6) of the ChemG. The reason for this is that extensive information on alcohol poisoning is already available. The Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) is responsible for medicinal products and narcotics listed in the Narcotics Act. As part of pharmacovigilance (monitoring the safety of medicinal products), adverse effects are recorded and benefit-risk assessments are carried out. The safety of veterinary medicinal products is monitored by the German Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL).

In case of reports by doctors pursuant to Section 16e ChemG, cases of poisoning with narcotic-substances that are not authorised as medicinal products are also registered. Poisoning with cosmetics, tobacco products, medical devices and (with exceptions) food and feed is exempt from this reporting obligation. These product groups are subject to separate laws governing monitoring.

Even after the introduction of the German Poisoning Registry, a certain number of unreported cases of poisoning can be expected, as not all those affected seek advice from a poison centre, for example.

Who is obliged to report cases of poisoning?

All doctors who are consulted in cases of poisoning by hazardous substances, mixtures, products or biocide products – including suspected cases – are obliged under Section 16e of the German Chemicals Act to submit the essential information to the BfR. In case of occupational accidents, the statutory accident insurance institutions are responsible for reporting these cases.

From January 2026, Poison Centres will also be obliged to report their cases of poisoning to the BfR.

In addition to the legally required communications, the BfR also accepts voluntary reports (e.g. from affected parties). These can be submitted informally using the contact details or the form provided on the BfR website. After toxicological assessment, the anonymized data are registered in the database. However, the BfR cannot provide advice on individual cases. This is the responsibility of GPs and doctors as well as Poison Centres.

Further information and reporting options can be found here:

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/chemikaliensicherheit/vergiftungen/poisoning-reports-according-to-the-national-chemicals-act-and-the/>

What are Poison Centres?

Poison Centres are medical facilities that advise callers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in cases of poisoning or suspected poisoning. This means that those affected can be helped quickly and, in many cases, do not need to visit a doctor. There are currently seven Poison Centres in Germany.

You can find an overview here (in German):

<https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/verzeichnis-der-poison-centres.pdf>.

Currently, the Poison Centres receive a total of around 300,000 calls per year regarding cases of poisoning or suspected poisoning. However, there is currently no nationwide consolidation and systematic evaluation of the information on these cases. This is set to change with the German Poisoning Registry.

How many cases are expected to be reported from 2026 onwards?

Once all seven Poison Centres are connected, it is expected that over 200,000 cases will be entered into the database each year, in addition to the approximately 10,000 cases reported by accident insurance providers.

The number of consultations at Poison Centres has risen steadily in recent years.

Why is the German Poisoning Registry being set up?

Until now, there has been no comprehensive overview of poisoning incidents in Germany because the data, particularly from the Poison Centres, has not been collated. However, such an overview is a prerequisite for Germany to be able to fulfil its reporting obligations to the EU and the WHO, e.g. on poisoning with biocide or in the occurrence of supra-regional health hazards.

Accurate knowledge of poisoning cases is also an important basis for risk assessment of many different substances and product groups. With the help of the collected data, patterns in type and frequency of certain types of poisoning can be identified. This also supports poisoning advice and the establishment of regulations and preventive measures for hazardous substances or products.

In addition, consumers can be specifically informed about risks in order to prevent cases of poisoning. Examples of this include poisoning accidents with high prevalence among children or the confusion of edible and inedible plants and mushrooms.

In future, the data will also contribute to the early detection of risk, thereby strengthening consumer protection.

How have reports of poisoning incidents been recorded to date?

Case reports on poisoning have been collected by the BfR and its predecessor institutions since 1990. This is based on the German Chemicals Act, which requires doctors to report all cases of poisoning involving substances, products or biocides to the BfR, including suspected cases.

Currently, around 8,000 cases of poisoning are reported to the BfR each year. The majority of these reports to the BfR come from professional associations and other statutory accident

insurance providers, for example, regarding accidents at work involving cleaning agents and disinfectants, smoke poisoning or chemicals used in laboratories or production. The poison centres, on the other hand, receive cases covering a broader spectrum, including, in particular, those involving children.

How is data protection ensured in the German Poisoning Registry?

As a matter of principle, personal data may not be reported to the German Poisoning Registry or taken up there.

The design and operation of the database incorporate security measures in accordance with a security concept based on the requirements of the Federal Office for Information Security (BSI). These technical and organisational measures ensure the highest level of data and information security.

For these reasons, direct access to the German Poisoning Registry from outside sources is strictly regulated and limited to Poison Centres.

What tasks are associated with the operation of the German Poisoning Registry?

- Receipt and technical and content-related quality assurance of communications from Poison Centres
- Electronic recording and processing (categorisation) of communications of poisoning cases
- Evaluation of poisoning reports for the preparation of reports for the BfR risk assessment, to fulfil Germany's national and international (EU, WHO) reporting obligations, to inform the relevant federal ministries and subordinate authorities, the public or to respond to further external enquiries where there is a legitimate interest
- Maintenance and further development of the case database and reporting procedures
- Health risk assessments of poisoning (focus on acute toxicology) within the scope of the BfR's technical tasks
- Participation in national and international research projects

The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment is also involved in research and development projects in the field of human data use in the domain of regulatory (clinical) toxicology.

Further information on the BfR website on accidental poisoning

Press release: Collecting data, saving lives: Exchange on the German Poisoning Registry
<https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/press-release/collecting-data-saving-lives-exchange-on-the-german-poisoning-register/>

About the BfR

The German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) is a scientifically independent institution within the portfolio of the German Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity (BMLEH). It protects people's health preventively in the fields of public health and veterinary public health. The BfR provides advice to the Federal Government as well as the Federal States ('Laender') on questions related to food, feed, chemical and product safety. The BfR conducts its own research on topics closely related to its assessment tasks.

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