Ivermectin Calls to the Poison Center Increase

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Ivermectin related calls to the Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information have slowly increased in recent weeks.

“Since the beginning of May, we’ve received reports of 11 people being exposed to ivermectin. Most developed relatively minor symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and dizziness, though there’s the potential for more serious effects including low blood pressure and seizures with an overdose, as well as interactions with medications such as blood thinners” says Scott Schaeffer, managing director of the Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information.

 “Never use medications intended for animals on yourself. Many animal drugs are available in different concentrations than those used for humans, and are often available in much larger quantities because they are intended for use in large animals like horses and cows. As a result, there is the potential for an excessive dose to cause toxic effects,” Schaeffer added.

Ivermectin is used to treat several conditions in both animals and humans. In animals it is approved for the treatment of heartworms and other internal and external parasites. FDA-approved uses for the drug in humans include treatment of some parasitic worms, as well as for treatment of external parasites such as head lice and for some skin conditions such as rosacea. All products for use in humans are available only with a prescription.

The drug company Merck released a statement in February 2021 regarding the use of ivermectin for COVID-19. The statement indicates that no scientific basis for a potential therapeutic effect against COVID-19 has been established from pre-clinical studies, though Merck scientists continue to carefully examine the findings of all available and emerging studies of ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19 for efficacy and safety.

Pharmacists and registered nurses at the poison center are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (800) 222-1222. Please do not email the poison center or a member of the poison center staff, as poisoning emergencies are not handled through email. The Oklahoma Center for Poison and Drug Information is a program of the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy at the OU Health Sciences Center. For more information, visit OklahomaPoison.org.

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