



ALERT FOR EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CLINICIANS

Severe toxicity after ingesting large quantities of poppy seeds

KEY POINTS

- **Consumption of large quantities of poppy seeds in the form of poppy seed tea has been linked to seizures and severe reactions across Australia, including in Western Australia.**
- **Clinicians are advised to consider toxicity associated with the consumption of poppy seed tea in individuals presenting with unexpected features such as seizures.**
- **Contact the WA Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 25 for clinical advice.**
- **Notify suspected and confirmed cases to the WA Department of Health on 08 9328 0553 (24/7, ask to speak to the Public Health Physician).**

Current situation

- Cases of severe toxicity have been identified in a small number of people across Australia who report consuming large quantities of poppy seeds in the form of poppy seed tea. One suspected case has been identified in Western Australia.
- Onset is rapid (within hours) and cases may present with features such as:
 - dizziness, tachycardia, hypertension and diaphoresis
 - muscle pain, spasm and rigidity
 - clonus
 - unsteady gait
 - metabolic acidosis
 - rhabdomyolysis
 - seizures
 - cardiac arrest.
- The clinical picture appears to be consistent with thebaine toxicity (found in poppy seeds), but further investigation and testing is underway to understand the cause. Other causes have not been excluded.
- Toxic effects are not expected when using poppy seeds for intended culinary uses such as in baked goods.

Advice for clinicians

- Clinicians should ask about the consumption of poppy seed tea in anyone who presents with the above clinical picture, particularly where there are no other obvious causes for the clinical presentation.
- Contact WA Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26 for advice on testing and clinical management of suspected cases.

Notification of cases

- Please notify cases to the WA Department of Health to facilitate further public health investigation and action on 08 9328 0553 and ask to speak to the Public Health Physician.

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Access Clinician Alerts online at: https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Health-alerts-infectious-diseases