Objective: The National Toxicological Information Centre (NTIC) in Bratislava was founded in 1968. It has been providing information to the general public since 2001 which now accounts for a significant proportion (23%) of enquiries to the NTIC. This study was performed to describe enquiries from the general public and to determine how many were related to non-toxic exposures.

Results: The general public made 5687 enquiries about human poisoning during the study period. 3504 (61.6%) patients were children, mostly under the age of 5; 2183 (38.4%) were adults. Most exposures (97.8%, n=5561) were accidental and 86.8% (n=4930) of all exposures occurred in the home or a domestic environment. Household products (39.1%) and drugs (26.2%) were the most common agents. 4406 (77.5%) patients were asymptomatic at the time of the call, 743 (13.1%) had mild features and 79 (1.4%) had moderate features. Symptoms were not known or were unrelated to poisoning in 454 cases (8.0%). Five adults had severe features following intentional overdose. 2911 patients (51.2%) required no treatment and a further 671 (11.7%) could be managed at home with advice to seek medical attention if symptoms developed. 831 patients (14.6%) were immediately referred to a hospital.

Methods: All telephone enquiries to the NTIC from the general public about human cases of poisoning between 1 January 2001 and 31 December 2011 were retrospectively reviewed. Data was collated on patient age, circumstances and location of the poisoning incident, agents, poisoning severity score and treatment advice.

Conclusion: The majority of the enquiries from the general public were about accidental, non-toxic exposures in children. Most of these patients required no treatment or could be managed at home. The number of these consultations increases every year. In these cases a consultation with a toxicological centre significantly reduces the necessity of a medical facility visit and saves the costs of the health care.