Child Poisonings with Methadone in France:

A 6 Years Prospective National Survey since the Availability of Capsules in 2008.

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Background:
- Before 2008, methadone used in France for opiate substitution was only available as syrup.
- In 2007 the French Health Authorities permitted the availability of solid forms.
- A national survey was performed in order to evaluate the modification of child poisonings induced by such a new pharmaceutical form.

Methods:
A prospective study was set up (April 15, 2008 to April 15, 2014) with the analysis of cases of ingestion of methadone by patients under 18 years.
**Results:** 87 cases of child poisonings with the 2 forms were reviewed (syrup 56 patients, capsules 31 patients).

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 1:** Methadone Child Exposure evaluated with «Poisoning severity score». 
**Results:** Comparison shows that patients were similar for both forms (no significant difference concerning age [median 2 years], sex ratio [M/F 0.85], previous history and ingested methadone quantities). There was a similar severity profile with both forms proving that methadone can lead to child lethal intoxications (1 death with capsule, 4 with syrup). The relative risk of paediatric accidents is also the same with 2 forms, leading the health authorities in collaboration with the laboratories to perform the elaboration and distribution of flyers. The aim was to inform patients who are also parents about the high dangers for children of their treatment whatever the form of methadone present in the house.
Discussion: The results of this survey were similar to those of another national study of the French Poison Centres about adult suicide attempts with methadone. Both prospective studies lead to the conclusion that methadone must be considered as a dangerous molecule for patients and their families. The recent availability of a solid form in France did not change the profile of poisonings with this opiate substitution treatment.