



The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Common Holiday Mishaps

NJ Poison Experts Keep Families Safe Through the Holidays

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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

**NEWARK, N.J. — December 8, 2011 —** The hustle and bustle of the holiday season is upon us. With all the excitement, it is easy to forget that potential tragedy can occur during this joyous time of year. As you prepare for the festivities, the New Jersey Poison Experts would like to remind you that common holiday mishaps can be avoided simply by paying attention and always supervising children and pets.

Follow these easy safety tips to keep your loved ones safe during this exciting time of year.

**Alcohol-** If accidentally swallowed by children and/or pets, leftover cocktails can be fatal! Always empty beverage glasses and place them out of reach of curious children and pets.

**Medicines-** Be sure to keep a safe, locked place for relatives and holiday visitors to store any medications they may be carrying with them. Never leave any medications in purses, nightstands, or in the bathroom where they are accessible to children.

**Toy Safety-** Be cautious of antique or foreign-made toys! They may contain lead and be hazardous to children. For Toy Safety call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772.

**Candles-** Place candles in secure areas where they cannot fall or be knocked over by children and pets. Use non-flammable holders and remember that small amounts of melted wax can become a choking hazard to small children.

**Button Batteries and Magnets-** These items are easy to swallow and can cause serious harm to children and pets. If ingested, button batteries can get stuck in the throat or stomach causing serious burns. If two or more magnets are ingested, they can attract one another internally, resulting in serious damage to the stomach or intestines.

**Holiday Plants-** Many plants can be potentially harmful if eaten or handled improperly so decorate for the holiday season using non-poisonous plants if possible. Holiday plants which can produce some toxic effects, mainly gastrointestinal, include Holly, Jerusalem Cherry, Mistletoe, Boxwood and a variety of species of the Yew. Contrary to popular belief, Poinsettias are not considered toxic when consumed in small amounts. Call the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222 to find out what other plants are considered to be toxic.

**Fire Salts-** Attractive when added to fires for the colorful flames they produce. These salts can produce serious stomach problems if ingested. They need to be kept out of reach from children.

**Tree Ornaments-** Ornaments resembling foods are as attractive as the real thing. A child or a dog may think a fake apple or cookie looks appetizing and attempt to eat it. If eaten, they can cause problems, so avoid using them for decoration.

**Lamp Oils**- Lamp oils pose serious danger. *Children are often confused by these oils because they look just like a beverage. If ingested, the oils can get into the lungs and cause pneumonia and even death.* Many of the lamps containing these oils are not child-resistant and must be kept away from children and pets. When not in use, store the lamps and extra oils, the same way you would store any chemical - Lock them up and keep them out of the reach of children.

**Wrapping Paper**- **DO NOT burn in the fireplace.** They may contain toxic metals like lead, may burn at such a high temperature that they may prove dangerous to the fireplace, or flake and send sparks out into the room causing a potential fire.

**Pets**- Make sure to keep chocolate, alcohol and illicit drugs out of reach of your pets. Ingestion of any of these can cause serious harm and even death. Be sure to keep all wires tucked away.

**Cigars and Cigarettes**- Empty all ashtrays after your holiday gathering. Children and pets have been known to eat cigars and cigarette "butts". There is enough nicotine in these tobacco products to be considered poisonous to children and pets.

**Food**- All foods should be prepared and cooked properly to avoid food poisoning. Food poisoning usually occurs two to six hours after eating the contaminated food and can include nausea, fever, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. Depending on the exact type of food poisoning, how your body reacts to the toxin and the amount of contaminated food that was eaten, symptoms may last from several hours to two or three days. Food poisoning can be serious for people in poor health, as well as the very young and the elderly. For tips on food safety, please click on the link (<http://www.njpies.org/News-and-Events/Press-Releases.aspx>) to read our November press release.

**Fireplace**- Have chimneys and flues inspected by a professional before each heating season. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that poses a serious health concern. Carbon monoxide poisoning is often referred to as the "Silent Killer."

### **Call to Action – Help is Just a Phone Call Away**

NJPIES leaders urge medical professionals, parents, educators, caregivers and the general public to call the toll-free poison center hot line, 800-222-1222, with any poison related question as well as for non-emergency questions regarding medications, household products, plants, environmental contaminants, or other poisons. The hotline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NJ poison experts recommend putting the number in all family cell phones as well as programming it as a speed dial number on landlines. In addition, the hotline number should be prominently posted near all phones in the home. Real People. Real Answers.

### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, it has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

### **About UMDNJ**

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation's largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state's three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than 2 million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.

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