



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



NEWS RELEASE

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Be Mindful When Celebrating New Year's Eve Mixing Alcohol and Medications...A Dangerous Combination

Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director,
Dr. Bruce Ruck, Director, Drug Information and Professional Education
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

NEWARK, N.J. — December 22, 2011 — Thousands of people are planning to bring in the New Year (2012) at some type of social gathering, whether it's at home with friends and family or "out on the town". During this time of celebration, alcohol consumption significantly increases, putting many in danger of possible injury and even death. We as a society have been bombarded with safety messages about the dangers of drinking and driving, but are Americans aware of the dangers of mixing alcohol and medications? The danger is REAL and the consequences serious.

Medications are safe and effective when used according to the directions on the label. It is never recommended to take any medication while consuming alcohol. Mixing the two together, whether the medications are prescription, over-the-counter, dietary, or herbal, could prove to be a costly mistake. Alcohol can cause harmful side effects, produce an additive effect, or intensify a medication's effect increasing the risk of side effects making it toxic to the body,

Be mindful that many medications contain more than one ingredient, some even contain alcohol. Each ingredient in a particular medication can interact differently with alcohol. Alcohol-medication interactions can still occur even if they are not taken at the same time. The NJ Poison Experts recommend always reading the label of any medication before taking it to find out what ingredients it contains and avoid drinking alcohol if you are taking a medication and don't know how it will react with alcohol.

"When you mix alcohol and medicines together, you are potentially putting yourself at risk for a dangerous reaction," says Dr. Steven Marcus, executive and medical director of NJPIES. Nausea and vomiting, headaches, drowsiness, fainting, or loss of coordination are just some of the side effects from this dangerous combination. You can also be putting yourself at risk for internal bleeding, heart problems, liver problems and difficulties in breathing.

If you are planning on consuming alcohol and are currently taking a medication, either prescription, over-the-counter, dietary, or herbal, please contact your local pharmacist or the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222 to find out how alcohol might interact with the medications you are taking.

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 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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