



## ***MEDIA ALERT***

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

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### **Winter Safety Alerts from New Jersey Poison Control: Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, Hypothermia and Food Spoilage**

**24/7 Multilingual Hotline: 1-800-222-1222**

Dr. 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. — February 1, 2011** As area residents and businesses prepare for a major ice/snow storm, experts from the NJ Poison Control Center offer the following winter safety recommendations for preventing carbon monoxide poisoning, hypothermia, and food spoilage.

### **CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING**

***Carbon monoxide*** is a clear and odorless poisonous gas. **Unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning is common during severe weather conditions.** Signs and symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning *may* include: headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability, nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination and death.

#### NJPIES recommends:

- Never use gasoline powered equipment/generators or tools and/or kerosene heaters inside the house or in enclosed spaces.
- DO NOT leave the car running inside the garage with the garage door closed.
- DO NOT use charcoal or propane grills inside the home. Do NOT heat the house/apartment with the stove!
- Clear any snow accumulation from all outside dryer and heating vents, as well as auto exhaust pipes.
- Install Carbon Monoxide detectors in homes and check them periodically to make sure they are working properly.

### **HYPOTHERMIA**

***Hypothermia***, a body temperature of less than or equal to 95°F, kills many Americans every year. Infants, children, and the elderly are at greatest risk. Signs and symptoms *may* include: numbness,

fatigue, poor coordination, slurred speech, impaired mental state, blueness or puffiness of the skin, difficulty concentrating and death.

NJPIES recommends:

- Stay warm and dress appropriately! For prolonged exposure to cold, wear insulated or layered clothing that does not retain moisture. Wear a head cover!
- Avoid over-exertion and excessive sweating in the cold.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, especially in cold temperatures.
- Some medications may increase your risk. Check with your doctor, pharmacist or call the Poison Control Center

## FOOD SPOILAGE

**With large numbers of homes suffering from power outages, it is important to be careful about food stored in refrigerators and freezers which have lost power.** Food-borne illness, also known as food poisoning, results from the eating of food that is contaminated with harmful bacteria, viruses or other foreign material. Contamination is caused by improper food handling and preparation practices. The symptoms of food-borne illness are flu-like and may include abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and fever.

NJPIES recommends:

- During a power outage, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed and open them only when necessary.
- Place a refrigerator thermometer in the center of the middle shelf and check the temperature. If it has risen to 45 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, discard any potentially spoiled foods. Such foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy and egg products, soft cheese, cooked beans, cooked rice, cooked potatoes, cooked pasta, potato salad, custard and pudding.
- When power is restored, allow time for the refrigerator to reach below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before restocking.
- "When in doubt, throw it out!"

### 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, its state-of-the-art center is located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies should call the bilingual toll-free hot line, 1-800-222-1222, 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 two 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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