



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

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Easter and Passover Holidays Remind Us to Spring Clean Our Homes

--Keep Homes Safe for Your Loved Ones --

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. — March 29, 2012** — Easter and Passover holidays are often a time of year where families do their spring cleaning. Data shows that more than 90% of poisonings happen in the home; therefore, this is a great time to take action and make poison prevention a family priority. Poisoning is now the leading cause of unintentional death in this country ahead of motor vehicle accidents and firearms.

Do you have items in your home that could be a potential poison if used in the wrong way? Of course you do and so does everyone else! Who doesn't have laundry detergent, medicines, pesticides, batteries, vitamins, cleaning products, mouthwash, rubbing alcohol, car/house maintenance products, gardening chemicals, etc. These are all safe when used for their intended purpose, but on the other hand, they can cause harm when used inappropriately. Where are your products stored; are they easily accessible by your loved ones, including pets?

Poisonings are a danger to us all. They can occur anywhere, at any time, to anyone (toddlers, teens, adults, seniors, even pets). They don't just happen to children; in fact, most people who die from poisons are adults, not children. "I encourage everyone to take spring-cleaning to a whole new level by not forgetting to clean out their medicine cabinets, closets and pantries, garages and sheds," said Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center. "All medicines and toxic substances should be locked up and kept out of sight and reach of children and even pets. If it can be seen, assume he or she can reach it," said Dr. Marcus.

Remember to protect yourself and your loved ones this year when you set out to do your spring cleaning. Poisonings are preventable!

### FOOD POISONING

- Always wash hands with soap and water before and after handling raw foods.
- Perishable foods like raw/cooked meats, poultry, and seafood should be kept refrigerated. If left at room temperature for 2 hours or more, they should be discarded.
- Symptoms of food poisoning include: nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, chills and fever, diarrhea, and weakness. Symptoms can occur 1-8 hours after eating "toxic" food.

### EGGS

- Always wash hands with soap and water before and after handling raw eggs.
- Raw eggs may carry bacteria known as Salmonella. Cook eggs fully before decorating. If you use raw eggs for cookie dough or cake batter, be sure to use eggs pasteurized in their shells so licking the spoon may be safe. If you happen to touch the liquid inside of a raw egg, immediately wash your hands with soap and water.

## CLEANING PRODUCTS

- Keep cleaning products in their original, child-resistant bottles and containers. Do not use food containers (such as cups or bottles) to store household cleaners and other strong chemicals.
- LOCK UP all cleaning products. Keep them out of sight and reach of children and pets.
- Store chemicals away from food. Many poisonings occur when one product is mistaken for another.
- To protect children from exposure to mouse/rat/insect poison, use products with a tamper-resistant bait station.
- Always close cleaning product containers immediately after use and put them away in a secure, locked location after use.
- Turn on fans and open windows when using household cleaners and chemicals.
- Read and follow the directions for use of products. Do this BEFORE using the products. Follow the advice carefully.
- Wear protective clothing, including long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, shoes and gloves, when spraying pesticides and other chemicals. Pesticides can be absorbed through the skin and can be extremely poisonous.
- Never mix chemicals. Doing so can create a poisonous gas.

## MEDICATION SAFETY

- All medicine and toxic substances should be LOCKED UP and out of sight and reach of children and pets. If it can be seen, assume he or she can reach it.
- Never give or take medicines in the DARK - turn on a light and use glasses if needed.
- Avoid taking medicines in front of kids -- never call it "candy." Explain what medicine is and why only adults can give it to them.
- Never share or take old prescription medicines. Taking more than the prescribed amount of medicine can be dangerous.
- Clean out medicine cabinets, closets and pantries periodically. Safely dispose of medicines that are expired or no longer needed.
- Keep medicines (as well as vitamins and diet supplements) in their original, child-resistant bottles or containers. Do this at home AND when traveling. Remember, child resistant is not the same thing as child-proof.
- Give infants and children only medicines that are safe for their age and weight.
- Replace caps tightly after each use of a medication.
- Read and follow directions and warnings on the label before taking or giving medicine EVERY TIME.
- Never leave medicine or vitamins out on a kitchen counter or at a sick child's bedside, even if you have to give the medicine again in a few hours.
- Ask babysitters, visitors and houseguests to keep coats, purses, briefcases, or bags that have medicine in them locked up and out of sight from children and pets while they are in your home.
- Monitor the use of medicines prescribed for children and teenagers, such as medicines for attention deficit disorders (ADD).
- Avoid mixing medicine and alcohol because some medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal/dietary supplements) can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol.
- Use only the measuring device (dosing cup, dosing syringe or dropper) that is included with your medicine.

## CHOCOLATE

- Chocolate can be toxic to both cats and dogs. Symptoms include convulsions, heart problems, nausea, and vomiting.
- Be mindful that chewable chocolate laxatives (medicines) look just like milk chocolate (candy). It's difficult to tell the difference between the two so keep these laxatives locked up and out of children's sight and reach. Excessive diarrhea which leads to fluid loss will result from swallowing too many laxatives. This is especially dangerous for young children.

## EASTER GRASS

- Keep away from young children and pets as this product can be a choking hazard. It can cause intestinal obstruction if ingested.

## EASTER EGG DYE

- Be sure to use only food dye to color eggs; most of these are non toxic. Despite their lack of serious toxicity, children should be supervised at all times while decorating their eggs.

## EASTER PLANTS

- Easter Lilly: Keep away from pets. Poisonous to cats.
- Lily of the Valley: If ingested, this plant can cause heart problems.
- Tulips and other bulb spring flowers: The bulbs can be irritating to your skin. If swallowed, they can cause distress.

If the unthinkable happens, it's good to know the NJ Poison Experts are just a phone call away. Call the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) for accidents or questions involving medicines, chemicals or household products, etc. Help is available in over 150 languages; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too. There are no silly questions, and trained staff are always available to answer a question, quell a fear, provide advice, or intervene to get emergency services on site and prepped to provide the needed protocol in the fastest response time" said Dr. Marcus. He added, "When in doubt, check it out - Prevention is truly the best possible medicine." Real People. Real Answers.

Follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) to be poison smart. Be a poison prevention superhero - share poison prevention tips with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

### **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. You may also chat or text in using our website, [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org). **Real People. Real Answers.**

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 (home and office). In addition, prominently post the number near all phones in the home and office.

Follow us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

### **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. NJPIES 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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