



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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Flu Sufferers Beware - Tips to Avoid Unintentional Poisonings-

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Available for Interviews

Newark, N.J. — January 28, 2013 — Experts say that this flu season is one of the worst in history. Flu sufferers know the symptoms all too well...fever, cough and/or sore throat, headache, stuffy or runny nose, body ache, chills, and fatigue. Many have been prescribed antiviral medications for the flu as well as antibiotics to deal with any secondary infections. In addition, sufferers have gone to their local pharmacies/supermarkets to seek non-prescription/over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve the discomfort associated with their symptoms. Although these medications may provide relief, there is opportunity for unintentional poisonings and misuse.

The NJ Poison Experts caution about the dangers of mixing prescription and OTC medications. A common misconception of the public is that non-prescription/over-the-counter medications are not dangerous because they are sold in pharmacies, supermarkets and chain-stores without a prescription. On the contrary, such medications may in fact produce serious and possibly fatal side effects/reactions to those taking them. Adverse effects range from agitation to drowsiness and/or stomach upset to liver damage.

The increased amount of medications in the home during flu season raises another dangerous issue. Since there are more medications lying around, there now is more opportunity for children and pets to discover and swallow them. Poison experts strongly urge adults to lock up all medicines and toxic substances. Keeping them locked up and out of sight and reach may save a life. Adults are to assume that if a child or pet can see it, he or she can reach it.

The NJ Poison Experts are here to help 800-222-1222. Remember to keep these tips in mind when using medications of any kind:

- Select medications that treat **ONLY** the symptoms you have. For example, use a decongestant if you are congested, but only use decongestants with cough suppressant if you have a cough as well.
- Remember that more does not mean better. Don't take medicines longer or in higher doses than the label recommends. If symptoms persist, it is time to see a doctor.
- Double check ingredients to prevent unintentional overdoses. Many times medications with different names and even different intended purposes contain the same active ingredients. Taking these, even if each is in the intended dose, together can lead to dire consequences including liver damage. For example, acetaminophen is the same active ingredient in both headache medications, fever reducers and cough products.
- Be particularly careful about converting dose instructions. With liquid medications, it is best to use a measuring spoon or a dosing cup marked in teaspoons, not a common kitchen spoon. Be sure to give infants and children only medications that are safe for their age and weight.
- Dispose of any unused and/or expired prescription and non-prescription/OTC medication. Remind seniors to do the same. Disposing of medications will help keep dangerous, addictive drugs off the street thereby decreasing pill abuse in NJ communities. Drop-off sites are available in NJ where these medications can be safely discarded. Call the NJ Poison Experts at 800-222-1222 for a local drop-off site near you.

- Follow the product label instructions. Be sure to put on a light and your glasses if needed to read the label carefully before each dose is taken or given to someone else.
- Avoid adverse drug interactions/side effects. Medications may possibly interact with other medications a person is taking or other medical problems they may have. If you are currently taking any prescription or non-prescription medications, ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for assistance in choosing non-prescription medications. If this is not possible, the NJ Poison Experts are available to answer questions you may have regarding drug interactions, dosing, etc. NJ Poison Experts are available 24 hours a day/7 days a week/every day of the year at **800-222-1222**.

If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the NJ Poison Experts at (800-222-1222). Doing online research and learning about medical conditions is a new sign of the times and a must-do for a savvy patient. But savvy patients need to know when it's important to put down the smartphone and dial an emergency number to get help. They NJ Poison Experts are always here to help with 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 our trained medical 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. When in doubt, check it out - Prevention is truly the best possible medicine. Remember, Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

Real People. Real Answers.

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. **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) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Be poison smart - share poison prevention tips with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

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 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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