

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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Stay Safe While Enjoying Fall Activities

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – October 10, 2014 — New Jersey residents often take advantage of the cool, comfortable temperatures of autumn to enjoy the beauty of nature and fall festivities. The NJ Poison Experts are urging residents to be aware of some potential dangers.

Unpasteurized Apple Cider

- Unpasteurized apple cider outbreaks of diarrhea caused by E. coli found in unpasteurized cider.
 - Buy pasteurized! Read the label.
 - Refrigerate cider appropriately. Fresh apple cider will last approximately two weeks if refrigerated. Apple cider can also be frozen for up to a year and still retain quality of taste
 - Warm your cider to appropriate temperatures. We recommend heating cider to 212°F to help reduce contamination

Petting Zoos/Animal Exhibits

- Animals can carry germs that are harmful to humans.
- Wash your hands frequently, immediately after petting animals, touching the animal enclosure, or exiting animal areas even if you did not touch an animal.
 - Running water and soap are best. Use hand sanitizers if running water and soap are not available. Be sure to wash your hands (and under nails) with soap and water as soon as a sink is available.
- Avoid putting hands near your face, do not eat without washing your hands carefully

Sun Exposure

- Sunburn is still a concern during the fall season. Avoid sunburn by limiting time spent in the sun especially when the sun is the strongest (from 10 am to 2 pm).
- Wear clothing to cover exposed skin (long-sleeve shirts, pants, hats, and sunglasses) and regularly apply sunscreen with a broad spectrum SPF of 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection.
- Use caution in the sun because some medications can greatly increase the chance for severe sunburn even when using sunscreen. Speak to your physician and pharmacist about the medications you take and determine if they increase your risk for sunburn!

"We get a number of calls this time of year from people who are stung by insects, touch a potentially poisonous plant or eat an unknown berry or mushroom they find when cleaning up their yards," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center.

To prevent these common mishaps when hiking, camping, or cleaning your backyard, follow the safety tips below.

Plants

- **Poison ivy** — Poison ivy has branches that contain three leaves, with three leaflets on each. The center leaf is on a stalk that is longer than the other two. In the fall, its leaves can be orange, yellow, red or brown. Remember this little ditty, "Leaves of three let it be."

- **Poison oak** — Poison oak can grow as a shrub or a vine. Similar to poison ivy, its branches have three leaves with three leaflets. Its leaves resemble oak leaves.
- **Poison sumac** — Poison sumac is a tall shrub that grows in wet, sandy soil. It has paired sets of leaves with seven to 13 leaflets on each. As with poison ivy and poison oak, the center leaflet is on a stalk that is longer than the others. In the fall, its flowers are yellow-green and its berries are white.
- Do not burn poisonous plants — the toxins can escape into the air, causing illness if inhaled.
- These plants produce harmful oils up until the first frost.
- Even when you wear long sleeves and gloves, the oil from the plant can remain on clothing for weeks if not washed. Oil can contaminate the fur of pets, therefore, petting a dog/cat who has been exposed to such oil may result in you getting poison ivy.

Mushrooms

- Poisonous mushrooms may look similar to non-poisonous ones. There is no easy way to tell the difference between them.
- Only experts can tell poisonous mushrooms from safe mushrooms.
- Eating even a few bites of certain mushrooms can cause liver damage that can kill you.
- Unless you are a mushroom expert, stay clear of them. Do not touch, pick, taste or otherwise use any wild mushrooms

Berries

- Berries are often found on plants in the fall and some can be poisonous.
- Avoid common misconceptions that generalize the safety of berries based on appearance such as color or texture — poisonous berries can be black, red or white and can be either bumpy or smooth.
- Always supervise children and pets when near bushes and trees that contain berries.
- Some berries that can harm people do not harm birds or other animals.

Bees and wasps

- Bees and wasps remain active until the first frost and can make their homes in or near gutters.
- Stings usually cause redness and swelling and can be itchy and painful
- People who are allergic to insect stings should go to a hospital if they experience hives, dizziness, breathing trouble or swelling around the eyes and mouth.
- Do not attempt to remove a stinger! If you suspect there is a stinger left after a bee sting, seek professional help to remove it.

Spiders and ticks

- Spiders and ticks can often be found in high grass or under piles of leaves or branches.
- Although most spiders found in NJ and tick bites do not cause harm. If there is severe pain from what is thought to have been a spider bite, seek medical care.
- If a tick is found embedded in the skin, try to remove it by grasping it with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and pulling upward with a steady, even pressure, taking care to remove the tick intact.
- Do NOT apply heat, alcohol, petroleum jelly or fingernail polish to an embedded tick.
- Some ticks carry Lyme disease — look for signs of infection by monitoring the area of the bite for a red “bullseye” rash that can appear up to a month after the tick is removed.

Snakes

- Although most snakes found in New Jersey are harmless, a small handful are venomous, including the northern copperhead and timber rattlesnake. It is unusual to encounter one, but if such an encounter occurs, it is best to give the snake his own space. Although a snakebite from an indigenous snake in NJ is generally not life threatening, they can be painful and cause damage, so a bite is to be avoided.
- Nonpoisonous snake bites can be treated by cleaning and caring for the wound to prevent infection. In some cases, a tetanus booster shot is suggested.
- All snake bites should be treated immediately at a hospital or emergency care facility

Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms. If an exposure occurs, it's good to know help is just a phone call away. 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 (1-800-222-1222)**. "Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. "Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes."

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature like Hurricane Sandy. Call 800-222-1222, chat via www.njpies.org, or text in at 8002221222@njpies.org to contact a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

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 Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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 Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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