

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:

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

SAFETY First Prevent Mishaps during Passover/Easter

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – April 2015 — Holidays are always a fun time of year but can become hectic when families begin preparing for the celebration. Mishaps occur all the time, but they are more common around the holidays when people in the household are distracted, making it much easier to overlook common household hazards. Over 90 percent (%) of poisonings reported to poison centers happen in people's homes.

While getting ready for the Passover/Easter holidays, many families start their spring cleaning. Adults in the household must pay extra attention to what they are leaving unsecured around the home. Medications and household products used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person can be dangerous, even fatal. If it can be seen, assume a child or pet can get to it.

Case: While busy cleaning and preparing for the upcoming holiday, the adults never noticed that the toddler of the family grabbed the can of oven cleaner that was left on the kitchen table. Luckily the child only put his lips on the spout but did not swallow any when his aunt grabbed it away. He ended up with just a small blister on his lips. This could have been a life-threatening situation if he actually took a gulp of the cleaner.

Parents and caregivers need to heed the warning from the poison experts -- "Children and pets will explore if it is in their sight and reach," said Steven Marcus, MD, Medical and Executive Director of the NJ Poison Center. "You shouldn't only lock up household chemicals and pesticides, but also vitamins, medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, dietary and/or herbal supplements), laundry supplies, alcohol, e-cigarettes cartridges and nicotine refills."

Case: While on an Easter egg hunt with her family, a baby was playing with her older brother's toy in her carriage. She started to cough but no one thought much of it until the older brother tried to play with the toy and it would not work. They noticed the back of the toy was off and the disk battery was missing. In a panic, dad started to search the Internet from his phone to find out what could happen if the battery was swallowed. Good thing he found the Poison Help number right away. He then called the poison center for help. Within 3 minutes of that phone call, the child was on her way to the hospital to determine if the battery was ingested and where it was in the GI track. After consultation with a poison expert, the emergency room staff called in a specialist to remove the battery. The child did well, and a life-threatening event was averted.

The experts at the NJ Poison Center receive calls regarding exposures to products, chemicals, medicines, etc. on a daily basis. "No matter the reason for calling, we are always available to help in an emergency or when you are in doubt," said Dr. Marcus. "Let us help you make the right decisions on what needs to be done. Save our number in your phone (1-800-222-1222) and ask friends and family to do the same."

Case: A family's grandfather was visiting for the holiday and offered to watch the baby while mom got some things done around the house. When the baby started to cry, the grandfather gave him what he thought was a teething toy. Turns out, grandpa mistook a laundry detergent packet laying on the kitchen table for a teething toy. Once he noticed what happened, he immediately called his daughter and they called 911 for help. The dispatcher immediately

connected them to the poison center where they were instructed to immediately take the baby to the nearest ER. The baby was seen and monitored by ER medical staff. Luckily no serious damage was done and the baby was released later that evening. Parents beware: laundry detergent packets are much more concentrated than regular laundry which causes more severe problems if ingested.

The poison center plays a crucial role in helping loved ones when the unthinkable happens; providing FREE, fast, confidential, expert medical advice to anyone in New Jersey 24/7/365. Not only does it help save lives, it also saves time and money; a value added to the free service. Calling the poison experts first before rushing to the emergency room can potentially save the caller, the insurance company and the state of New Jersey millions of dollars each year by keeping people out of the hospitals, getting them back to work sooner, and teaching prevention.

Although poisonings can cause serious injuries and even death, most are preventable! Don't spend your holiday in an emergency room. Prevent mishaps from occurring. Pay attention to the safety tips below, it could prevent a life-threatening exposure, even save a life.

Prevention First - Things to Remember for the Passover/Easter Holiday

- When preparing meals, always wash hands with soap and warm water before and after handling raw foods.
- Raw eggs may carry bacteria known as Salmonella. Cook eggs fully before decorating. If using raw eggs for cookie dough or cake batter, be sure to use eggs pasteurized in their shells so licking the spoon may be safe.
- Use only food dye to color eggs. Although most of these are non-toxic, children should be supervised at all times. Children can mistake the colored tablets used to dye eggs for candy.
- Keep Easter grass away from young children and pets as this product can be a choking hazard and can cause intestinal obstruction if ingested.
- Chocolate can be toxic to both cats and dogs. Symptoms include convulsions, heart problems, nausea, and vomiting.
- Ask visitors and houseguests to keep coats, purses, briefcases, luggage, etc. containing medicine (prescription, over-the-counter, herbal and/or dietary supplements) locked up and out of sight from children and pets while they are in your home.
- While cleaning, keep the area well ventilated by turning on fans and opening windows. Fumes from these products can be very strong and can cause injury. Remember to never mix cleaners or chemicals together; doing so could create a poisonous gas.
- Store cleaning products and chemicals away from food. Many injuries occur when one product is mistaken for another. Never store them in food containers like cups and bottles.
- Always throw out leftover alcohol used during religious ceremonies. Empty beverage glasses and place them out of reach of curious children and pets. If accidentally swallowed, leftover alcohol can be fatal!
- Avoid drinking alcohol if you are taking medicines. The interaction between the two can cause serious injury.
- Do not pick plants/mushrooms to eat from your backyard or fields. Even experts are often fooled by look-alikes which are toxic.
- Some holiday plants can be toxic to pets. Please use extreme caution when bringing in flowers, bouquets, and new plants into your pet-friendly household
 - Easter Lily: 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 you believe your child, pet, or anyone else has ingested something that could be harmful, call the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the poison center. A quick response by both the caller and the poison center expert can make a difference in preventing serious injury and saving lives. Every minute counts in poisoning situations so do not take chances by either waiting until symptoms occur or waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

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. Stay tuned for more poison prevention week safety information.

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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