

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

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Media can contact:

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

Fight Back Against Rx Drug Abuse - October 28, 2017 - National Prescription Drug Take Back Day

(Newark, NJ) – The perfect storm for accidental ingestions by toddlers and abuse by teens and adults... unused medicines at home.

Case: A 2-year-old toddler who got into a drawer full of unused medicines while visiting his grandparents. He swallowed one pill used for blood pressure control and another for diabetes. After consultation with the poison control center, the child was sent into the emergency room where he stayed for 24 hours of monitoring.

Case: A 15-year-old female who had several pain pills leftover after her wisdom tooth removal. While at a party, she and a friend decided to experiment and get high. They both took her pain pills and drank alcohol throughout the night. Both teens ended up in the emergency room after falling into a very deep sleep and neither could be easily awoken.

These two cases highlight the need to remove unused medicines from the home. Prescription drug abuse and drug overdose deaths have taken America by storm. The numbers have skyrocketed in recent years in both the U.S. and here in New Jersey. We have reached a point where the rates are climbing year to year with no end in sight. Opioids are killing men and women of all ages, races and in all parts of the country. "Every day (in the United States), more than 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments for misusing prescription opioids, and more than 40 people die from prescription opioid overdoses."¹

Here in New Jersey, the fallout of this epidemic is grim. According to preliminary data reported by NJ Advance Media, "deaths from drug overdoses likely topped 2,000 in 2016; killing more people than guns, car accidents and suicides combined."² The 2016 death toll from drug overdose is the "highest ever recorded in New Jersey, spurred by continued growth of the opioid epidemic."² Opioid overdose deaths from prescription pain medicine, heroin and fentanyl are a driving force behind these rising statistics. A major risk factor for heroin addiction is prior addiction to prescription opioid pain relievers.³ According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), a prescription opioid is involved in nearly half of all opioid overdose deaths in this country.⁴

Unused medicines left in the home have the potential to cause injury and overdose when not used appropriately according to Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director of the NJ Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School. Many of these medicines are highly prone to being stolen, misused, and abused.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [CDC Rx Awareness Campaign Overview](#). Accessed October 13, 2017.

² NJ Advance Media. [The death toll from drugs just reached a grim new high in N.J.](#) Accessed October 13, 2017.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Heroin - Risk Factors](#). Accessed October 13, 2017.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Opioid Overdose](#). Accessed October 13, 2017.

“Taking prescription medicine for something it’s not prescribed for, especially to get high, is like playing Russian roulette,” says Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School. “Home medicine cabinets often provide easy access to such drugs. This is why we urge safe storage of these medicines, and disposal of those which are no longer being used.” By keeping medicines away from children, teens, family, friends and visitors, you just may save a life; preventing possible unintentional exposures, drug overdoses, and suicides.

Mark your calendar and commit to making a difference here in New Jersey on Saturday, October 28, 2017. Join local New Jersey law enforcement agencies for the next statewide prescription drug take back event scheduled from 10AM to 2PM. This one-day event will allow you to drop off any unneeded, unused or expired medicines for safe disposal. This event is free of charge and drop-offs will be strictly anonymous, no questions asked. This is a great opportunity for those who may have missed the last event or who have accumulated more medicines since then. Your participation will help get dangerous, addictive medicines off the streets and help prevent unintentional exposures in children and pets.

Contact the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for a participating site near you; remember to tell the seniors in your lives to do the same since they tend to have many medicines in their homes. If you are unable to attend the October 28th event, you may take your medication to one of the permanent RX drop-off boxes located in many NJ communities. Call the poison center to assist you in finding a site in your area.

“Drug overdose is serious and time sensitive. Get help right away if you suspect someone has overdosed on any medicine or drug,” says Calello. Call the NJ Poison Control Center unless the person is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or seizing then call 9-1-1. Poison control centers are a great resource for information and emergencies. Keep us at your fingertips. Save the Poison Help number (1-800-222-1222) as a contact in your cell phone.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter (@NJPoisonCenter) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

Real People. Real Answers.

Available for Media Interviews

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)
Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director of Drug Information and Professional Education, New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

About NJPIES

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) is New Jersey’s only poison control center. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer free consultation through hotline services (telephone, text and chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. In addition, it tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the New Jersey Department of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NJPIES’ confidential services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. When needed, NJPIES responds to other emergent health issues by expanding hotline services.

NJPIES is designated as the state’s regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of Rutgers New Jersey Medical

School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents should save the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, in their mobile phones and post the number somewhere visible in their home. NJPIES is also available via text 8002221222@njpies.org and chat www.njpies.org.
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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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