



New Jersey Poison Information and Education Services

NJPIES Fact Sheet

What is NJPIES?

As New Jersey's official Poison Control Center, The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hotline services and the web. It coordinates State poison education and research and is the designated regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. Medical professionals including physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies, poison prevention information, drug information, food poisoning, animal bites, and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

What is a CSPI? Trained specialists at the Poison Control Center are called CSPIs (pronounced spies) for Certified Specialists in Poison Information. They are trained in toxicology to spot the symptoms of a poisoning, correctly diagnose the poison, and recommending the correct course of treatment. They are today's real-life medical detectives, but unlike TV forensic detectives, they specialize in preventing deaths rather than investigating why the death occurred.

What is a Poison? A poison is anything taken or experienced in too high a dosage for an individual based on his or her age and size. Even water, if provided in too large a dose, can kill a person.

What does a Poison Center do? Through its 24/7 hotline, it provides immediate access to any resident to a trained bank of physicians, pharmacists and nurses skilled in medical toxicology. It is a key first responder for help on the scene of a medical emergency either before EMS services can arrive, or in handling a situation preventing the use of EMS services that can remain available for more critical emergency situations.

How is it involved in counter-terrorism? Bio-hazards are one of the most frightening forms of terrorism as demonstrated by the Anthrax scares of a few years ago. NJPIES specialists are the state's local expert in bio-hazard treatments. It is a service we hope to never have to truly offer.

How does New Jersey's service rank in the nation? NJPIES is a recognized leader in the field. Its Executive Medical Director, Dr. Steven Marcus, was the leader in getting a nationwide 800 number adopted by Congress. He was recognized in 2009 with the American College of Medical Toxicology Ellenhorn Award for extraordinary contributions in the field of medical toxicology and outstanding contributions in teaching, clinical practice and/or research. He was also honored with the Community Hero Award by the Women in Support of United Way of Essex and West Hudson at their 12th Annual *Night of Miracles* Gala, May 2009.

How does NJPIES benefit New Jersey? In many ways. From a 24/7 toll-free service available to all New Jersey residents, to providing centralized tracking services on developing medical trends and clusters. It is the leader in fighting lead-poisoning in young children, and is the leading resource on bio-hazard responses.

Is the service costly? It is free for NJ residents and a medical bargain for the state. Based on state support, NJPIES is able to secure federal and private grants that allow it to provide services to all NJ residents. Federal data show that for every \$1 invested in Poison services, \$7 are saved from not using more costly medical services. In an average year, NJPIES saves a minimum of \$9.5 million from residents being served outside of emergency rooms or not being admitted unnecessarily to hospitals for extended care.

Why call NJPIES versus going to an ER? Most poisonings are not immediately life-threatening and if caught immediately can be treated on the scene faster and with less intensive intervention. If emergency room services are required, the Center will call for a dispatch while staying on the phone with the patient. While en route to the hospital, NJPIES staff provide valuable information on the incident, diagnosis and treatment protocol so the ER staff are fully prepped for the required treatment.

Don't ER doctors know about poisons? ER doctors are trained to triage for poison, which means then getting the experts on the case for treatment. The average ER physician may see 1-2 poisonings a year, whereas NJIES specialists deal with dozens a day.