

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

## NEWS RELEASE

Media to contact:  
800-222-1222  
800-962-1253 if outside NJ

For Immediate Release  
September 30, 2019

### Health Alert

#### Prevent Getting Sick After Visiting Animal Exhibits

**(Newark, NJ)** – Fall weekends are perfect for visiting festivals, agricultural/state fairs and farms with the family. From picking pumpkins and apples, to face painting and corn mazes, there is always something fun to do in New Jersey. Two very popular attractions, especially with young children, are petting zoos and animal exhibits. Unfortunately, what many visitors do not know is that even healthy animals can sometimes carry germs, which can lead to people getting sick after their visit. Interacting with animals at these types of events have been associated with outbreaks of E. coli infection. It is important for visitors to be aware of the possible risk of infection when in contact with exhibit animals.

The simplest way to prevent illness is to wash hands frequently during your visit. Since germs spread easily, be sure to wash hands immediately after petting animals, touching the animal enclosures and/or exiting the animal areas. Wash hands even if you did not come into direct contact with any of the animals. Avoid eating, drinking and touching your eyes and mouth until you have washed your hands thoroughly. If running water and soap are not available, use hand sanitizers until you can get to a sink to wash properly.

Keep food and drinks out of animal enclosures; germs can spread to food and cause sickness. Remember not to eat or drink products sold as raw (unpasteurized); this includes apple cider, milk, cheese and juice. When buying food from a vendor, be sure it is cooked thoroughly before eating. Food poisoning is a common health risk at public events.

“Although interacting with live farm animals is a learning experience for people of all ages, we must remember animals carry germs that can make us very sick; especially, young children, adults over 65 years of age, those with weakened immune systems, and pregnant women” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#)’s Department of Emergency Medicine. “Wash hands often and keep all belongings outside of animal areas, including strollers, bottles/cups, toys, and pacifiers to prevent contamination.”

If you suspect illness, do not wait until symptoms occur or waste time looking up information on the Internet. Contact your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 to get the immediate help you or a loved one needs. Center experts are health professionals available 24/7 for emergencies, questions/concerns, or information. Services are free, confidential, and a language line is available (over 150 languages). New Jersey residents can reach their center in the following ways: call (1-800-222-1222), [text](#), or [chat](#).

**If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or seizing, call 9-1-1 immediately.**

## **Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

Stay Connected: Facebook ([@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 Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers NJ Medical School

### **About New Jersey Poison Control Center / 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](mailto:8002221222@njpies.org) and chat [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Website](#)

### **About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: [njms.rutgers.edu](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

###