



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



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Alicia Gambino, MA, CHES, NJPIES Director of Public Education, 973-972-9280, agambino@njpies.org

Keep Halloween Safe and Fun for Little Monsters, Ghosts and Goblins

Tips from the Poison Experts

Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director,
Dr. Bruce Ruck, Director, Drug Information and Professional Education
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

- Never allow children to eat candy until it has been inspected by parents or caregivers. Eat only treats in original and unopened wrappers.
- When trick-or-treating at night, children should use a flashlight or glow stick to light the way and allow them to be seen in the dark.¹
- Trick-or-treaters should wear brightly colored costumes made of flame resistant materials.
- Remove Jack-O-Lanterns with lit candles inside them from doorsteps. Candles can be easily knocked over by children and pets.
- Liquid from a broken glow stick is usually non-toxic, but if your child ingests it, call the poison experts if you are unsure or have any questions.
- Wash hands or use a hand sanitizer after trick or treating, petting animals or picking pumpkins and apples.
- Use non-toxic face paint or make-up as an alternative to wearing a mask.
- Beware of peanuts or peanut oil in candies, for those with allergies.
- Be mindful of pets. Treats such as chocolate can be poisonous to dogs or cats.
- Make sure any items that can cause choking, such as hard candy, are given to children of an appropriate age to avoid choking.
- Don't drink unpasteurized cider.
- Lock up medications, especially those that can be mistaken for candy (e.g., ex-lax®, Advil®).
- NJPIES hot line is the first line of defense (800-222-1222).

NEWARK, N.J. — October 21, 2011 — It's easy to be scared about Halloween, especially if you're a parent trying to supervise your child's safety. The key concerns about safety, however, particularly in regard to candy poisonings, are no different in October than during the rest of the year, according to NJPIES, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System, also known as poison control. Experts at NJPIES (www.njpies.org) urge parents and caregivers to be alert and take precautions to avoid unpleasant incidents and keep these delightful annual treks safe and fun.

"Halloween is one of the busiest times of the year for the doctors, pharmacists and nurses who answer the hot line at our 24-hour call center," said Dr. Steven Marcus, executive and medical director of NJPIES. "This time of year, we get calls about anything from bug bites to stomach aches (usually due to consumption of too much candy — not necessarily tainted candy). But mishaps can occur at any time, and being prepared and informed about how to handle them in advance can ensure an enjoyable experience."

He said that one of the topics unique to this time of year is accidental ingestion of glow stick liquid. "The substance in glow sticks is not a toxin, just an irritant," said Dr. Marcus. "But very often, parents call 9-1-1 or spend hours in the emergency room, only to be told that the resulting sore throat and upset stomach can be relieved with a little milk — advice that would have been quickly provided over the phone by one of our trained medical professionals."

Dr. Marcus provided some additional tips for a variety of fall activities that warrant keeping the NJPIES toll-free hot line number handy:

- Trick-or-treat at homes of friends and neighbors you know — never accept candy or fruit from strangers.

- Supervise children when sorting and consuming candy — be sure all edible items are in original packaging, and are separated from nonedible items.
- Always keep medications safely stored in locked cabinets and out of reach of children. Some medications, which come in various colors, look similar to and can be easily mistaken for candy.
- Wash hands thoroughly or use a hand sanitizer — this is especially important for trips to local farms for apple and pumpkin picking or feeding and petting farm animals.
- Avoid drinking fresh, unpasteurized cider.
- “Bee” aware — yellow jackets are often active around farms and garden centers during the warm days and cool nights of fall, especially around fallen or rotting fruit. Those with sensitivity to stings should carry an antihistamine or bee sting therapy.

Dr. Marcus added that the most important thing is not to panic and to have the poison control center’s hot line number close by — program it into home and cell phones for quick access. Help is just a phone call away.

Call to Action

NJPIES leaders urge medical professionals, parents, educators, caregivers and the general public to call the toll-free poison center hot line, 800-222-1222, with any questions about Halloween safety or for any poisoning emergency.

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 the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, it has a state-of-the-art center located on the school’s Newark campus.

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 UMDNJ

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation’s largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state’s three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than 2 million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.

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Cited Sources:

¹ http://www.halloween-safety.com/halloween_safety_treats.html