



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



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Nancy Sergeant, SGW, 973-263-5471, nsergeant@sgw.com

Mary Appelmann, SGW, 973-263-5182, mappelmann@sgw.com

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

UNCOVER HIDDEN HOME DANGERS BEFORE THEY RUIN YOUR HOLIDAY

New Jersey Poison Control Offers Round-the-Clock
Prevention and Emergency Counsel, Even on Christmas!

Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director,
New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) *Available for Interviews*

NEWARK, N.J. — December 1, 2010 — A family holiday gathering can be quickly ruined by inattention to safety. Food-borne illness ... toxic toys ... teens “pharming” for holiday highs — there are plenty of challenges during the holiday season. Fortunately, medical professionals — physicians, nurses and pharmacists — remain on call 24/7, including holidays, at the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System, New Jersey’s Poison Control Center.

Last year, the medical staff at NJPIES fielded 151 calls on Thanksgiving Day, 131 on Christmas Day and 164 calls on New Year’s Eve. They offer the following tips to help people stay safe and healthy during this festive time of year.

Food Safety

- Make sure the refrigerator is set below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- When preparing food for the holidays, always start with clean hands and a clean preparation area.
- Wash surfaces often when working with meat, fish, poultry and dairy.
- Do not place cooked foods on plates that previously held uncooked foods.
- Cook all foods to proper temperatures. Use a meat thermometer when cooking meat or poultry.
- If the power goes out, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about 4 hours if unopened. A full freezer with the door closed will keep items frozen for about 48 hours (or 24 hours if half full).
- Buy your dairy products near the end of your shopping trip. They should not be left at room temperature any longer than needed, and never more than 2 hours.
- Remember to check the “best if used by” date or “sell by” date for food. When in doubt, throw it out.

Toy Safety

- If in doubt about a toy, call NJPIES for information on which toys may be on the recall list.
- Avoid toys with small magnets for children under age 6, and make sure that small batteries in battery-operated toys are secured.
- If you have a question about a toy, save the packaging as a reference when calling NJPIES at 1-800-222-1222. This can help staff determine possible safety or toxicity issues.

Partygoer Safety

- When planning the menu, check with your guests to see if they have food allergies. Increasing numbers of adults and children are developing allergies to foods. Taking care to avoid problematic foods can prevent an unnecessary trip to the emergency room.
- If you're giving a party, remove all prescription and over-the-counter drugs from accessible medicine cabinets and other storage areas (bedside stands, kitchen cabinets, etc.).
- The prescription or over-the-counter medicine a partygoer is taking may not mix well with party food and beverages being served. Call NJPIES for advice.
- Call the NJPIES hotline at 1-800-222-1222 if you suspect food poisoning of any sort. The center tracks calls to determine if an incident is isolated or part of an area-wide trend.
- If you choose to drink alcohol in mixed drinks, select fruit juices over carbonated mixers. Carbonation speeds the absorption of alcohol.

Pet Safety

- Keep holly, mistletoe and lilies out of reach of pets. Pets don't understand that indoor greenery isn't edible. Call NJPIES if your pet has ingested any potentially harmful substance.
- Do not put aspirin in the water to help keep your Christmas tree fresh. It can be harmful to your pet if ingested.
- Keep snow globes out of reach of both pets and small children because they may contain antifreeze, which can be poisonous if ingested.
- Many enjoyable holiday foods for humans can cause discomfort or illness in your pet. The best defense is to not feed your pet any human food. Be especially careful to keep your pet away from chocolate and alcohol.

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 hotline 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, NJPIES 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 multilingual toll-free hotline, **800-222-1222**, anytime. 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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