

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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Driving While Under the Influence It's Not Only Alcohol – Medications Count Too

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – December 3, 2014 — The message about “drugged driving” is clear...it is dangerous for you, your passengers, and others on the road. Driving while under the influence of certain medications could get you in the same kind of trouble as those caught driving under the influence of alcohol. Drugs whether illegal, prescription, or over-the counter medications act on the brain and central nervous system, therefore, some have the potential to negatively affecting driving skills. The effects of specific drugs differ depending on how they are used, the amount consumed, the medical history of the user, and other factors.

The majority of medications available to consumers should not impair one's driving ability, but there are medications that can. Use caution when taking the following medications because they are known to cause reactions that may make it unsafe to drive a car, bus, train, plane, boat, or operate heavy machinery.

- prescription drugs for anxiety
- some antidepressants
- products containing codeine
- some cold remedies and allergy products
- diet pills, "stay awake" drugs, and other medications with stimulants (e.g. caffeine, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine)
- tranquilizers
- sleeping pills
- pain relievers
- allergy medications

Over-the-counter medications, also known as OTC or nonprescription medications are available without a prescription from a healthcare professional. Be mindful that both prescription and OTC medications have risks associated with them if used incorrectly, meaning not according to the directions on the label. Always read the Drug Facts label located on either the bottle or packaging of every medication. Be aware of the following reactions that may make it dangerous to drive or operate machinery.

- sleepiness/drowsiness
- blurred vision
- dizziness
- slowed movement
- fainting
- inability to focus or pay attention
- nausea
- excitability

Alcohol can cause harmful side effects, produce an additive effect, or intensify a medication's effect increasing the risk of side effects making it toxic to the body. Be mindful that many medications contain more than one ingredient, some even contain alcohol. Each ingredient in a particular medication can interact differently with alcohol. Alcohol-medication interactions can still occur even if they are not taken at the same time.

“When you mix alcohol and medicines together, you are potentially putting yourself at risk for a dangerous reaction,” says Dr. Bruce Ruck, Director of Drug Information and Professional Education at NJPIES. Nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, fainting, or loss of coordination are just some of the side effects from this dangerous combination.

If you are planning on driving while taking a medication (prescription or OTC) or consuming alcohol while taking a medication, please discuss this with your physician, your local pharmacist, or the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222 to find out how the medication may affect you. Do not take chances by either waiting until symptoms occur or wasting valuable time looking up information on the Internet. Every minute counts in emergencies.

Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too. Experts are always here to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Calls are free and confidential. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature like Hurricane Sandy. Call 800-222-1222, chat via www.njpies.org, or text in at 8002221222@njpies.org to contact a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

Real People. Real Answers.

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 Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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 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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