

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Spring into Action with National Poison Prevention Week

-- Let's Make a Difference --

Steven Marcus, MD, Executive and Medical Director,
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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – March 10, 2014 — Spring is upon us and what better way to mark the occasion than by taking spring-cleaning to a whole new level. It's known that poisonings can happen to anyone at any time, from children to seniors and everyone in between including pets. "Take an active role in "poison-proofing" your home and workplace by going through medicine cabinets, closets and pantries, garages and sheds.

You shouldn't only lock up household chemicals and pesticides, but also vitamins and medicines whether they may be prescription, over-the-counter, dietary, and/or herbal supplements," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. Parents and caregivers especially need to heed the warning from the poison experts "Children and pets will explore if it is in their sight and reach. Be sure to safely dispose of the medicines and chemicals you have decided to remove."

National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW), March 16-22, 2014, has been nationally recognized for more than 50 years by poison centers across the country as well as US Presidents. This is a time to highlight the risks of being poisoned by household products, drugs and medicines, pesticides, plants, animal bites, insect bites and stings, food poisoning, workplace chemicals, and environmental toxins (fumes) for people of all ages. A "poison" by our definition is any substance that can harm someone if it is used in the wrong way, by the wrong person, or in the wrong amount.

"Poison experts work tirelessly to safeguard the health and well-being of every American through free, confidential, expert medical service as well as through providing education to build awareness that although unintentional poisoning can cause serious injuries and even death, they are preventable," said Dr. Marcus. "One of the things we are most proud of is managing over 34,000 callers with a suspected exposure at home." Keeping these callers at home significantly reduces emergency room visits and hence health care costs. Managing suspected exposures at home potentially saves the caller, the insurance company and the state of NJ millions of dollars every year."

Parents and babysitters call the NJ Poison Experts when their young children get into a potentially toxic substance. Seniors call when they fear they may have made an error in taking their medication or giving a medication to someone else. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and emergency room staff call the NJ Poison Experts for treatment advice on drug-or-poison-related cases. "No matter the reason for calling, the NJ Poison Experts offer free, confidential, medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year through the Poison Help Line at 800-222-1222," said Dr. Marcus.

The experts offer the following tips to avoid injury

- Use child-resistant packaging whenever possible. But remember, child-resistant is not childproof. It's only designed to keep children away from the product for a short amount of time before a parent notices.
- Never call medicine "candy" in order to get children to take it.
- Always turn on the light and where glasses if needed when giving or taking medicine. Check the dosage every time.
- Never take more than the prescribed amount of medicine or "borrow" a friend's medicine.

- Ask babysitters, visitors, and houseguests to keep purses, briefcases or bags that contain medicines locked up and out of sight from your children and pets. The same rule applies when your children are visiting a friend or relative's home.
- Keep cleaning products in their original containers with their original labels intact.
- Never use empty food containers such as cups or bottles to store household and chemical products.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors (CO) and fire alarms. CO detectors should be near or in your home's sleeping areas as well as on every floor of the home. Check batteries twice a year.
- Keep batteries out of the reach and sight of children and pets. Contact the poison center right away if a child swallows a battery or a battery is missing from a toy or other household item, no matter how small the battery.
- Keep laundry detergent pods locked up at all times.

"Use National Poison Prevention Week as the time to inspect your entire home for any medicines or household products, such as detergents, cleaning products, pesticides and fertilizers car maintenance products, snow melting products, that may not be stored properly and correct the situation immediately to prevent a mishap. These as well as others should be locked up out of sight and reach of children and pets," said Dr. Marcus.

If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the **NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222)**. "Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Dr. Steven Marcus. "Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes."

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. Call 800-222-1222 to speak with 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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