

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  
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### Carbon Monoxide Does NOT Discriminate

Cold Weather Brings Increased Risk of Poisoning

**(Newark, NJ) – Don't Be the Next Statistic. Experts at the state's poison control center are all too familiar with the dangerous, even deadly health effects of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. The center is often involved in the medical management of patients exposed to carbon monoxide.**

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas overlooked by many because it gives no warning – you can't see, smell, hear, or taste it. The effects of CO are hard to detect, and symptoms often mimic those of viral illnesses like the common cold and the flu. Additionally, the gas is undetectable without a working carbon monoxide detector. This combination creates the perfect storm for a dangerous, even deadly public health risk.

Last month, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) visited the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#) to discuss the significant health risks posed by carbon monoxide exposure. While visiting the poison center, he [announced](#) bipartisan legislation requiring carbon monoxide detectors be installed in all federally subsidized residences. It is important to remember that CO poisoning poses a risk to all people and pets, including those living in public or rural housing.

Although the only way to detect a leak is with a CO detector, it is important to know how to recognize the effects associated with CO poisoning, and to seek help immediately upon the onset of symptoms. Common symptoms of low-level poisoning include headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion, and irritability. At higher levels, poisoning can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, brain damage, and death.

"Don't be fooled. As we see every year, this poisonous gas can and does kill," says Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine. "Carbon monoxide poisoning is serious and should be handled as a medical emergency. Prevention and early detection are crucial in preventing poisoning injury and even death from carbon monoxide. You want to catch a leak in gas appliances and heating systems before it turns into a serious problem."

Although cold weather brings increased risk, carbon monoxide exposures happen throughout the year, resulting from sources other than gas appliances and heating systems. Lesser-known sources of exposure include portable gas generators used during severe weather; snow accumulation in car exhausts/tailpipes, heating and dryer vents; portable room heaters; fireplace/chimney flues; blocked engine and exhaust systems on boats; and smoking hookah in small and/or poorly ventilated spaces.

"Do not gamble with your family's health and well-being; CO detectors are a must even on boats," says Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center. Battery-operated

carbon monoxide detectors should be put on every level of the home and near every sleeping area. Always check the batteries of both detectors (fire and CO) when changing the clocks twice a year for daylight savings time.

**If you suspect a carbon monoxide exposure, take immediate action:**

1. If someone is unconscious or unresponsive, get him or her out of the house and call 9-1-1 immediately.
2. Exit the house/building immediately. Do not waste time opening windows. This will delay your escape and cause you to breathe in even more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department/energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for immediate medical treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call us for fast, free, and accurate information.

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.**

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**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 to monitor for 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](https://www.njpies.org) and chat [www.njpies.org](https://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).

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