

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

## NEWS RELEASE

---

For Immediate Release  
April 10, 2020

### Coronavirus Hotline at New Jersey Poison Center Assists Over 15,000 Residents

**(Newark, NJ)** – The COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) outbreak has hit New Jersey hard. Thousands of residents are ill with coronavirus (confirmed positive) and the numbers continues to soar each day. During this time of uncertainty, all residents are frightened and concerned for their health and that of their loved ones. In response, Governor Phil Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Health established the NJ Coronavirus Hotline, 1-800-962-1253, to provide up-to-date medical information about this emerging outbreak to the public, 24/7, in any language. This is in partnership with NJ 2-1-1, the statewide hotline providing non-medical assistance about COVID-19 including information about housing, unemployment, and testing site locations.

The New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES), also known as the New Jersey Poison Center, has been part of the State's COVID-19 response since late January when the Governor announced opening the NJ Coronavirus Hotline. Poison Center staff have worked around the clock to provide a reliable resource to concerned New Jerseyans — credible information to alleviate fear and dispel rumors, up-to-date guidance for ill persons and the worried well, and best-practices for prevention. NJPIES has also recruited many healthcare volunteers within Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) to assist with call volume. With emerging outbreaks, information changes quickly. Poison center staff are in daily contact with State and Federal health officials to monitor questions as they arise and to also participate in daily briefings on new information.

"Since its inception, the State's Coronavirus Hotline has assisted over 15,000 New Jersey callers, with an unprecedented surge in call volume as the pandemic has unfolded in our state," 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. "To ensure the coronavirus hotline stays accessible to the public during the current surge, we implemented a contingency plan which enables us to continue our mission of providing medical advice and assistance 24/7 — expanded our available phone lines, put remote teleworker status into effect to allow additional staff on the phones, and deployed a multidisciplinary team of Rutgers graduate student and faculty volunteers. Moving forward, we continue to expand our staffing with dedicated healthcare volunteers throughout the state."

As COVID-19 continues to march through New Jersey, the hotline will be available 24 hours a day to assist the public with their growing concerns. "We ask that callers remain patient while waiting to speak with one of our staff. Hold times are longer than usual for the Poison Center as we continue to provide medical advice and assistance to over 500 callers a day," says Calello.

Are you a New Jersey resident looking for information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19)? There are three options available — Call **2-1-1**; Call **1-800-962-1253** (the NJ Poison Center); or Text: **NJCOVID** to **898-211**.

**If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, 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.**

---

#### **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 973-339-0702 and chat [www.njpies.org](http://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).

###