

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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### **Less Contact with Lead – Less Risk for Lead Poisoning National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2020**

**(New Jersey)** – Lead poisoning remains a serious health concern for New Jersey families. Lead is a toxic element that builds up in the blood and is stored in the bones. Over time, lead can cause serious health problems especially in young children. These health problems may never go away even after children are treated for lead poisoning (too much lead in the blood). It is important to know that there is no safe level of lead in the body for children or adults.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (October 25-31, 2020) reminds families to keep their loved ones from coming in contact with lead hazards before health problems develop. Lead can get into the body by breathing in or swallowing lead dust or lead particles. Lead in the body can cause damage to the brain and nervous system, learning and behavior problems, slow growth and development, and hearing and speech problems. Even low levels of lead in the body can cause harm.

The seriousness of the health effects of lead exposure depends on how much lead is in the body and how long a person was in contact with the lead source(s). “Coming in contact with lead dust or lead particles during early childhood development can cause devastating effects to a child’s health and wellbeing,” says Diane Calello, MD, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#).

“Children’s hands and toys can pick up household dust or outdoor soil contaminated with lead. Crawling children are most at risk because they put everything in their mouths. Act early and get your child tested for lead between 1 and 2 years old even if they look healthy. The effects of lead can be hard to notice. A simple blood test can detect the amount of lead in the body. If the test results show too much lead in the blood, your child must get treatment. You must also find the lead sources in your home or apartment to prevent your child from coming in contact with lead again. Get your home tested by a professional.”

Lead sources can be found in our everyday environments including outside dirt. Lead-based paint is the most common source of lead. It was used in many homes built before 1978. When lead-based paint chips or cracks it makes lead dust. Young children may eat paint chips, or chew on surfaces coated with lead-based paint, such as window sills. Home or building renovations or repairs can also produce lead dust which can stay in the air and settle in food, and around the house.

Lead can be found in drinking water if the water passes through lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. Lead can't be seen, tasted or smelled. The only way to know if there is lead in your water is to have it tested. Contact your local water authority for information about testing and identifying [lead in your water](#).

"Adults can also develop serious health effects from contact with lead. Although most think of children when they hear the terms lead exposure or lead poisoning, many adults have high levels of lead in their blood and do not know it," says Calello. "Lead poisoning can be easily overlooked in adults. Symptoms can appear slowly and are often similar to other health conditions." Toxic levels of lead in adults may include high blood pressure, decreased sex drive, infertility, memory loss and difficulty concentrating, hearing and vision problems, tiredness, and irritability and mood disorder.

"Pregnant women must avoid contact with lead to protect their developing baby. Lead can pass from the mother to the unborn baby and cause very serious damage to the baby's brain and nervous system. Even a little contact with lead can cause the baby to be born with behavior and intelligence problems."

Children and adults may come into contact with lead through sources other than paint, soil, and water. Jobs and hobbies (police, gun instructors, recreational shooting, welders, and gunsmiths) that involve coming in contact with lead put families at risk for lead poisoning. Lead dust and particles can be carried into vehicles and inside the home on clothes, shoes, and skin. Lead can also be brought into the home through candies, spices, makeup, imported foods, and folk medicines made in other countries. Also, be careful when buying toys, jewelry, pottery, and porcelain as some are painted with lead-based paint.

The best way to prevent the harmful effects of lead exposure is to stop coming in contact with lead before it causes harm.

1. Test your home for lead.
2. Test your child for lead poisoning even if they seem healthy.
3. Remove lead hazards immediately from your home.

Lead poisoning is a serious health concern. Get help right away if you think someone was exposed to lead. Call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 for medical treatment advice, 24/7. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1.

New Jersey residents: Call (1-800-222-1222); Text (973-339-0702); Chat via [website](#). Contact the NJ Poison Control Center for questions, emergencies, and information regarding lead or other poison-related exposure.

### **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, 1-800-222-1222**

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It 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 at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and 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.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; [Chat](#). 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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