

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

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release  
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### Summer Poisoning Hazards

#### Know the Risks – Prevent Injuries

**(Newark, NJ)** – With the unofficial start to summer upon us and the easing of many COVID-19 restrictions, New Jersey residents are ready to get out and enjoy the warm weather. Not only will people be celebrating the long holiday weekend, but also the beginning of returning to pre-pandemic activities. While we must continue following proven safety protocols to limit the spread of COVID-19, we also need protect our health from common summer hazards that have the potential to cause serious poisoning injury.

“As the public celebrates the much-anticipated summer season, our poison center prepares for an uptick in calls related to warm weather poisoning hazards,” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “Our summer calls range from food and alcohol poisoning to backyard/pool chemicals and heat-related illnesses.”

Summer is meant to be spent outdoors having fun, not in the emergency room/department. Keep your friends and families safe by being aware of potential poisoning hazards that lurk in and around our homes during the summer. “Accidental poisonings don’t just happen to young children, they happen to all including our pets. Since we come in contact with potential poisoning hazards in our daily home, school, work, and outdoor environments, it’s important to know to call your local poison control center for help if you have contact with something dangerous.”

Follow the poison safety strategies below to prevent an accidental poison exposure and potentially serious injury.

#### 10 Ways to Prevent Summer-Related Poisonings

- When preparing food, do not cross-contaminate. Raw foods can be contaminated with bacteria, viruses and parasites which can cause severe illness (food poisoning). Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling raw food.
- Marinate food in the refrigerator and not on the counter to prevent bacteria from growing. Do not put the marinade that had contact with raw meat, fish or poultry on cooked foods.

- Use caution while being in the sun as some medications can greatly increase the risk for heat-related illness and/or severe sunburn even when using sunscreen. Limit your time in the sun during the hottest times of the day. Apply and reapply broad-spectrum sunscreen that is water-resistance, SPF 30 or higher, and contains zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide as active ingredients.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious threat even during the summer. If you lose power, place gas generators at least 20 feet away from your home and your neighbors. Grills and camp stoves should never be used inside campers, tents, and boat cabins. When boating, do not idle and always swim and play away from rear swim decks or water platforms where engines usually vent.
- Store charcoal lighter fluid and lamp/torch oil in locked cabinets, away from food and drink items. Lamp oil refill bottles closely resemble juice containers and mistaken identity mishaps happen often. Swallowing these products can lead to serious poisoning and even death in children and pets.
- Use caution when drinking alcoholic beverages while taking medicine. Many ingredients used in medicines can interact dangerously with alcohol causing side effects like nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, fainting, and/or loss of coordination. Dangerous interactions can still occur even if the medicine and alcohol were not ingested at the same time.
- Do not pick or eat plants/mushrooms growing in the wild, even those you find in your own yard. Many people suffer serious health effects and even die each year from mushroom poisoning.
- Clean up immediately after parties. Cigarette butts, alcohol, liquid nicotine/vaping devices, and THC-containing products including edibles, can be extremely dangerous to both children and pets. Even swallowing small amounts of these products can be dangerous and cause serious health effects including death.
- Be on the lookout for poison ivy, oak, and sumac when spending time outdoors. These poisonous plants are common causes of seasonal, allergic contact dermatitis (rash). When touched, the oils from the plant can cause a mild to severe itchy rash – blisters, swelling, and redness. Do not scratch the rash as the dirt from your nails and hands can cause an infection.
- When using powdered chlorine to treat a swimming pool, avoid shaking the container to minimize dust, fumes and splashes. Open containers only in well-ventilated areas and preferably outdoors. Never mix chlorine with ammonia, an acid or other cleaning solutions. Doing so produces toxic gases that can have life-threatening effects.

If you have questions, concerns or an emergency regarding something potentially dangerous, contact the medical professionals at your local poison control center, 1-800-222-1222. Do not wait until symptoms occur or spend time looking for medical information online. Get the immediate medical help you or a loved one needs from your local poison center. Poison control center services are free, confidential, available 24/7, and information can be communicated in any language.

**If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1 immediately.**

New Jersey residents can reach their poison center in the following ways: Call the Poison Help Hotline (1-800-222-1222), Text (973-339-0702), or [Chat](#) via the Poison Center's website. Stay connected on social: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

**Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

**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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