

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

NEWS RELEASE

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It's More Than Just Contaminated Candy

NJ Poison Control Center Shares Halloween Safety Tips

(New Jersey) – Halloween is a time filled with exciting and fun activities, but it's also a busy time for families and the healthcare professionals at the NJ Poison Control Center. With everyone scrambling to prepare for school parades and trick-or-treating, it's hard to pay close attention to everything that's happening at home. Accidental poisoning mishaps are common and can happen to anyone including pets. Poisoning mishaps often happen at home and involve potential poisons hiding in plain sight.

"Although mishaps occur all the time, trick-or-treaters and their families are at increased risk of accidental poisoning related to Halloween celebrations and activities," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#).

"Potential poisoning risks go beyond the fear of tampered candy," says Calello. "Our medical professionals get calls throughout the night about many things – from glow sticks to allergic reactions; belly aches to marijuana edibles; and chemical burns to alcohol poisoning."

If planning parties, make sure children and pets don't get into alcoholic beverages. The amount of alcohol in beer, wine, liquor, and cocktails/punches affects children and pets differently than it affects adults. Even swallowing a small amount of alcohol can cause serious health problems and death.

Teens and adults often overindulge without realizing they have consumed too much alcohol. A person who appears to be very drunk or has passed out may be showing early signs of alcohol poisoning and be in real danger. Immediate medical help is essential. "Sleeping it off" is never a safe option. It's important to know the [critical signs](#) of alcohol poisoning.

Pets are not only at risk of alcohol poisoning, they're also at risk of poisoning from candies, chocolates, and other [Halloween-related items](#). Chocolate, cocoa, candy, and anything sugarless can be poisonous to pets. [Artificial sweeteners](#) like xylitol can cause severe illness if pets eat products containing this ingredient. Keep dangerous products up high and out of sight and reach of pets. If any of these items are swallowed, get help fast.

It's important to remember to plan safer ways to celebrate Halloween this year. "Don't just make it a poison safe Halloween, make it a COVID and flu safe Halloween too," says Calello. "Avoid crowded events and large groups with people from different households, keep celebrations outside as much as possible, wear a mask, keep windows open if traveling in cars as a group, and use hand-sanitizer to disinfect hands while out celebrating."

Additional safety tips for a safe and healthy Halloween.

- Go only to homes of people you know.
- Avoid homemade treats - there is always a risk of food poisoning.
- Teach your child that medicine is not candy. Lock up all medications to prevent an accidental poisoning.
- Use non-toxic makeup to paint faces and body parts. Test on a small area of skin to be sure it will not cause an allergic reaction.
- Dry ice can cause severe burns and frostbite if it touches the skin or is swallowed. Use gloves to protect your skin.

Poison control centers are a great resource in the event of an emergency and also for questions and information. New Jersey residents: Call 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat here](#)

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

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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.

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