

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

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Keep Thanksgiving Dinner Out of the Danger Zone Spread Thanks Not Germs

(New Jersey) – Holiday traditions, family gatherings, and home-cooked meals are a treasured part of the holiday season. With Thanksgiving just days away, families are hard at work preparing for holiday activities, family gatherings, and Thanksgiving dinner. Preparing holiday dinner can be overwhelming and stressful. Sometimes people get distracted and make mistakes that can cause guests to leave the table with more than full bellies.

“Whether you’re preparing dinner for two people or a large group, following basic food safety steps will keep everyone at the table from getting sick,” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “Foods can become contaminated with germs at any point of the food production chain — from farming to grocery stores to leftovers.”

Food poisoning is common and can cause mild to severe sickness. Symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhea, upset stomach and fever. A person may not feel sick right away because symptoms may appear a few hours or even a few days after eating. Anyone who is feeling sick should not be preparing or cooking foods because they can spread their germs to the food.

Bacteria and other germs grow quickly in foods that reach temperatures in the “Danger Zone” — between 40°F and 140°F. It is unsafe to leave food out of the refrigerator or freezer for more than two hours. Prevent food poisoning by always keeping foods out of the danger zone.

Foods can also be contaminated when they’re not handled safely or are undercooked. When preparing and cooking foods, follow [four safety steps](#) (Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill) to prevent people from getting sick.

Everyone is at risk for food poisoning, but young children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are more likely to get sick from eating foods contaminated with bacteria and other germs.

If this year's holiday dinner includes turkey, follow these important [food safety steps](#).

- Allow enough time for the turkey to defrost.
- Handle the turkey safely to prevent spreading germs to other foods.
- Do not wash or rinse raw turkey.
- Cook the stuffing separately from the turkey.
- Use a food thermometer to check for safe internal temperatures.
- Store leftovers safely.

Food poisoning can be serious. If you think you may have food poisoning, don't hesitate to get help from your local poison control center. Poison control centers are not only a great resource in times of emergency, but 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.

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 or [Chat Here](#). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Instagram](#) / [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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