

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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Check the Carbon Monoxide Detector

89 NJ Residents Helped Since October 1st

(New Jersey) – When was the last time you tested your carbon monoxide (CO) detector to make sure it was working? Did you remove the batteries and forget to replace them? Is the detector turned off or unplugged because it kept beeping? Having working CO detectors in your living space is the only way to know if there's a carbon monoxide leak in your home, building, business, or motorhome/RV.

"Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas overlooked by many people because it gives no warning – you can't see, smell, hear, or taste it," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "Since October of this year, our poison specialists have assisted 89 callers with carbon monoxide exposures."

Carbon monoxide poisoning is an immediate and deadly danger. Dangerous levels of CO gas can build up quickly poisoning those inside. People and pets can come in contact with this gas any time of the year. Carbon monoxide can only be detected by having working CO detectors.

"CO detectors don't malfunction as often as people think. When the alarm on your detector sounds, take it seriously and act fast," says Calello. "Most of the time, it's not malfunctioning – it's trying to save your life. Get outside right away and call your fire department or energy provider."

Install battery-operated or battery back-up CO detector on every floor and near bedrooms and other sleeping areas. Do a safety check two times a year to make sure the batteries and the units are working correctly. An easy way to remember to check the detectors is to check them when changing the time for Daylight Savings in the fall and spring. If you did not check the detectors on Sunday, November 7th, check them today.

“As we head into cold and flu season while continuing to battle COVID-19 infections, it’s important you pay careful attention to the signs and symptoms you may be feeling,” says Calello. “Early symptoms of CO poisoning can be confused with symptoms of viral illnesses like the common cold, seasonal flu and COVID-19.” Symptoms of CO poisoning may include headache, dizziness, weakness, tiredness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain and confusion.

Stopping a CO leak before it happens is the best way to prevent getting sick from carbon monoxide. This deadly gas can leak from heating systems and other fuel-burning appliances in your home or building. Have a heating and air conditioning professional do a safety check each year to make sure your heating system and other appliances are working properly.

Lesser-known sources of carbon monoxide poisoning include portable gas generators often used when homes and buildings lose power; blocked heating and dryer vents; portable room heaters; fireplace/chimney liners; blocked engine and exhausts on cars and boats; and smoking hookah in spaces that are too small and have little ventilation.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be hard to recognize. CO poisoning is a medical emergency that requires you to act quickly. If a person or pet came in contact with carbon monoxide, follow these steps and get help right away.

1. If a person is not breathing or hard to wake up, get them out of the house and call 9-1-1. If a pet was exposed to CO, contact a veterinarian or animal hospital.
2. Get out of the home or building right away. Do not stop to open windows. The longer you are inside the more carbon monoxide you will breathe in.
3. Contact your local fire department or energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 for medical treatment advice. Do not waste time “Googling” what to do. Call for fast, free, and accurate information.

Poison control centers are a medical resource for the public and healthcare professionals. Get help 24/7. 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!



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

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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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