

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

## NEWS RELEASE

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Media to contact:  
800-222-1222  
800-962-1253 if outside NJ

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### Home for the Holidays

#### Hidden Hazards of the Holiday Season

**(New Jersey)** – The holidays are an exciting and busy time of year! Whether you're traveling near or far, hosting or attending a gathering, or just cozying up at home, it's important to be aware of hidden holiday hazards that can cause potentially serious injury.

"Poison-related mishaps and injuries often occur right under our noses, especially during busy times of the year," says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#).

"There are many hidden holiday hazards that can be dangerous to people and pets including decorations, plants, toys and family dinner," says Calello. "When we're busy we often don't pay attention to what's happening around us, making it more likely to accidentally misuse common household products. If you're concerned something may be dangerous, call the NJ Poison Control Center for information and medical treatment advice for your individual situation."

Anything can be poisonous if used in the wrong way, in the wrong amount, or by the wrong person. Hidden dangers involve more than just medicines and chemicals. It's important to note that accidents happen to everyone, not just kids and pets.

#### Safety Tips

- Give guests a safe space (locked up is best) to keep potentially dangerous items including marijuana edibles, medicines, vaping/nicotine products, hand sanitizers, etc.
- Use caution with antique ornaments and those not made in the United States. These items may be decorated with harmful lead paint.
- Do not burn wrapping paper/foil, garland and tinsel. Inhaling the fumes can be harmful.
- Decorate with plants that are not poisonous if you have young kids or pets.
- Many baking extracts contain high levels of alcohol — the same alcohol found in liquor, wine and beer. Keep extracts out of sight and reach of kids and pets.
- Snow spray should only be used in areas that have good air circulation (outside is best) to prevent inhaling potentially harmful fumes. Keep this product away from flames.

- Have working [carbon monoxide](#) (CO) detectors on every level of your home. If the CO alarm sounds at any time, get out of the house right away and call for help.
- Keep household items that have disc batteries and small magnets out of sight and reach of kids and pets. They are a choking hazards and can cause damage to internal organs.
- Alcohol poisoning can cause serious illness and lasting health effects. Know how much alcohol you are drinking. Empty unfinished drinks to prevent kids and pets from accidentally drinking alcohol.
- Use simple [food safety steps](#) to prevent food poisoning, which can cause severe illness.
- Keep items dangerous to pets up high and out of sight and reach — chocolate, candy, products containing xylitol (a sugar substitute), bread/dough, fatty meat scraps, raisins/currants, alcohol, medicine, and recreational and illegal drugs.

The holidays are also a time to be aware of the increased risk of illness. Holiday activities carry a high risk for spreading germs causing colds, flu and COVID-19. This year choose [safer ways](#) to celebrate, including becoming fully [vaccinated](#) and getting a COVID-19 [booster](#).

If you think someone has come in contact with something potentially dangerous, contact your local poison control center immediately. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and healthcare professionals. Get help 24/7. 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 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, 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](#).  
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**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).