

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

For Immediate Release

Dangerously High Temperatures in New Jersey

Feeling Sick – Get Medical Help

(NJ) – New Jersey is experiencing a wave of dangerously hot and humid temperatures. Although most residents go about their daily routines regardless of the unbearable temperatures, extreme summer heat can cause dangerous health effects. When body temperatures rise to dangerous levels, the brain and body overheat resulting in an increased risk for [health-related illnesses](#), stroke, or death.

Everyone is at risk for heat-related illnesses, including heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat rash, and sun poisoning (which occurs with severe sunburn) from extreme temperatures. However, health effects may be more severe in certain groups including, children, older adults, people with chronic illnesses, and people with disabilities. Athletes, low-income families, outdoor workers, or anyone planning to spend long periods of time outdoors are also at high risk and should be aware of the symptoms of heat-related illnesses.

“Sadly, heat-related deaths and illnesses happen every 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](#). “**Hyperthermia** (heat stroke) not only occurs when temperatures reach dangerous levels, but also from the use of certain therapeutic medicines, recreational drugs, and illegal substances. These can prevent the body from cooling down through sweating. Too often this results in serious complications including drug-induced fever, dehydration, and death.”

Although it might seem that heat stroke comes on suddenly, warning signs often appear early on. Recognizing early symptoms can prevent a tragedy — stomach and muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, weakness, heavy sweat or a lack of sweat, confusion, odd behavior, irritability, delusions, hallucinations, seizures, and coma.

“Excessive heat combined with certain substances like ecstasy (MDMA), cocaine, methamphetamine, alcohol, and heroin can be deadly,” said Calello. “Being under the influence of these substances can make it hard to recognize symptoms of overheating.”

Medicines like antidepressants, antihistamines, diuretics, antipsychotics, and stimulants for ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) can also cause heat-related complications resulting in illness and death. It's important to know whether the medicine or drug you are taking increases your sensitivity to heat. Call your local poison control center for more information, 1-800-222-1222.

[Prevent](#) Heat-Related Death and Illnesses:

- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day even if you are not thirsty. Stay away from sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages (including mixed drinks and hard seltzers) as this can cause you to become dehydrated.
- **Stay Cool:** Avoid direct sun. When possible, stay indoors in air-conditioned areas especially when the sun is the hottest (early afternoon through early evening).
- **Dress Light:** The best clothing for extreme heat is light-colored, loose-fitting, and lightweight.
- **Wear Sunscreen and Wide-Brimmed Hat:** If outside, apply sunscreen frequently to protect against sunburn and sun poisoning. Sunburn can cause you to become dehydrated. Keep in mind that sweating, swimming, or otherwise being exposed to water will wash away sunscreen. Remember to reapply sunscreen often.
- **Keep Pets Safe:** If it is too hot for you, it is too hot for them. Give pets lots of fresh water and keep them indoors in air-conditioned areas as much as possible. Surfaces in direct sun get dangerously hot. If it's too hot to touch they shouldn't be walking on it. Give them a shaded area outside.
- **Hot Cars Kill:** Leaving people and pets in hot, parked cars is deadly. Even cars parked in the shade with their windows open reach deadly internal temperatures. Never leave them inside.

Heat stroke is a medical emergency – it is critical that you act fast. Contact your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If someone is not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, call 9-1-1.

If you think someone is feeling sick from dangerous outdoor temperatures or the person has come in contact with something potentially dangerous, contact your local poison control center immediately. Medical specialists are available to answer questions, provide information and emergency support 24 hours-a-day. Anyone can call for medical help – children, teens, and adults. Poison control centers are a medical resource for both the public and healthcare providers.

Call the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)

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



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.

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