

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

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

'Tis the Season for Home Holiday Hazards

NJ Poison Control Center Warns Some Hazards Hide in Plain Sight

(New Jersey) – The holidays are an exciting and busy time of year! Whether you're traveling, hosting or attending a gathering, or just cozying up at home, the holidays are filled with potential hazards that could ruin your holiday cheer.

"The holiday season is in full swing, and we've already had calls related to accidental exposure to products commonly found at home during the holidays," says Bruce Ruck, managing director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#). "Seemingly harmless items can cause serious and possible irreversible injuries."

Potential poisons can be found in every home. Decorations, plants, toys, and food are just a few of the many concerns the state's poison control center has around this time of year. The dangers of some hazards like cleaning products and medicines are well known. Other hazards like carbon monoxide, disc/button batteries, and small magnets hide in homes in plain sight.

Mishaps often happen when we're busy and not paying attention to what's happening around us. "It only takes seconds for common, everyday items to go from safe to dangerous," says Ruck.

Guessing whether it's a medical emergency, waiting for symptoms to appear, or wasting time searching for medical information online can delay medical treatment and lead to more severe health effects.

Keep the holidays merry and bright. Follow the safety tips below to prevent accidental injury.

- Give guests a safe space (locked up is best) to keep potentially dangerous items including marijuana edibles, medicines, vaping/nicotine products, and hand sanitizers.
- 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 and should be kept away from flames.
- [Carbon monoxide](#) (CO) kills hundreds of people every year and makes thousands more sick. Have working 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. If you have questions, call your poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Keep household items that have lithium disc/button batteries (also known as coin batteries) and small magnets out of sight and reach of kids and pets. Both are choking hazards and can cause serious and irreversible damage to internal organs.
- Alcohol poisoning can cause serious illness and lasting health effects. Know how much alcohol you are drinking. Empty unfinished alcoholic drinks especially holiday cocktails, eggnog, and punches to prevent kids and pets from accidentally drinking alcohol.
- Use simple [food safety steps](#) to prevent food poisoning, which can cause severe illness. Cooking foods to the right temperature kills germs and prevents people from getting sick. Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Although water-absorbing gel balls/beads are not toxic, they are extremely dangerous to anyone at risk of swallowing them or sticking them in the ear or nose – young children, people with developmental disabilities, people with dementia, and pets. These products expand to dangerous sizes in the body, causing choking and life-threatening blockages or ruptures of internal organs.
- 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. These items can cause serious health effects and death.

If you think someone came in contact with something dangerous, contact your local poison control center immediately. Medical specialists are available to provide information, answer questions, and provide 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 P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Department of Emergency Medicine, Rutgers NJ Medical School

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Department of Emergency Medicine, Rutgers NJ Medical School

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.

###