

The New Jersey Poison Control Center — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

HEALTH ADVISORY

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Even AI Knows Its Limits: Why Poison Centers Still Matter

When a pregnant woman accidentally took the wrong medicine, the platform recommended contacting Poison Control

When a 32-year-old pregnant woman accidentally took her husband's antidepressant medicine, she did what millions of Americans are increasingly doing for health information: She turned to artificial intelligence (AI) for answers.

Concerned about the potential effects on her pregnancy, she described the situation to an AI platform and asked what she should do. Rather than offering a diagnosis or treatment recommendation, the platform advised her to contact Poison Control by calling the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222.

Within minutes, she connected with the poison specialists at the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#), who evaluated the medicine involved, her stage of pregnancy, and other factors unique to her situation before determining the appropriate next steps.

The case highlights a reality in today's rapidly evolving digital world: while AI can be useful for finding some information, many health situations require individualized assessment and real-time expert guidance.

"The most interesting part of this case isn't that she asked AI first," said Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center. "It's that the platform recognized it couldn't provide the personalized assessment the situation required."

She added, "A poisoning isn't a trivia question with a single answer. Every situation is unique and the right recommendation for one person could be very different for another."

Poison specialists assess exposures in real time, ask critical follow-up questions and provide recommendations based on an individual's specific circumstances.

"Sometimes the most important information isn't what someone types into a search bar," said Bruce Ruck, managing director of the New Jersey Poison Control Center. "It's what emerges during a

conversation. By speaking directly with callers, we can ask follow-up questions, clarify critical details and provide guidance tailored to what's actually happening."

While many people associate Poison Control with young children, people of all ages, including teens and young adults, rely on poison centers every day. Calls may involve medication errors, accidental or intentional overdoses, alcohol and drug interactions, carbon monoxide exposures, household chemicals, cannabis products, dietary supplements, workplace incidents, environmental exposures, and other potential poisonings.

"Artificial intelligence is changing how people find information," said Calello. "But information and personalized medical assessment are not the same thing. In this case, the platform recommended the patient contact the Poison Help line, where she could speak directly with a poison specialist and receive guidance based on her specific circumstances."

If you have questions or concerns about a poisoning, medication error, overdose, toxic exposure or the safety of a product or substance, contact the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 or [chatting online](#). Specially trained poison specialists provide free, confidential expert medical guidance and individualized assessment 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For life-threatening emergencies, such as trouble breathing, difficulty waking or seizures, call 911.

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Available for Media Interviews

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About New Jersey Poison Control Center/NJPIES

The New Jersey Poison Control Center, officially known as the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), is the state's poison control center and is part of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine.

Poison specialists are doctors, nurses, and pharmacists who provide free, expert medical guidance for poisonings, medication errors, overdoses, drug interactions, carbon monoxide incidents, environmental hazards, household chemicals, bites and stings, plant-related concerns, and other poisoning emergencies. Services are free, confidential, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and accessible in any language.

Need Poison Control? Call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 or [Chat Here](#)

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Established in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS), part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, annually graduates around 170 skilled physicians and offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH, and MD/MBA programs. Committed to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and community engagement, NJMS comprises 20 dynamic academic departments and collaborates with healthcare partners, including University Hospital. With renowned

faculty, a student-run clinic, and many cutting-edge centers and institutes, NJMS invites you to explore its rich history and academic programs at <https://njms.rutgers.edu/>.

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