

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Check Your Heating System

- Don't Become a Statistic - Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning -

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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – October 21, 2013 — As you complete your “fall to do list” I bag your leaves, bring in your plants, clean your gutters, store outdoor furniture, cover air conditioners, service snow blowers, etc., the NJ Poison Experts strongly urge you to add to the list: schedule a seasonal checkup for your heating systems/fireplaces/furnaces, it is best to hire a professional to insure your family’s safety. Make sure everything is working and venting properly. Be sure you have installed both smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and changed the batteries on them. This is extremely important as we go into the heating season where carbon monoxide exposures and even poisoning becomes more common.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious concern of the NJ Poison Experts as we enter the heating season. It is often referred to as the “Silent Killer” because it is a gas that gives no warning – you can’t see it, smell it or taste it. When the gas is breathed into the body it combines with the body’s blood and prevents it from absorbing and using oxygen.

“Use extreme caution when using sources of carbon monoxide such as kerosene and gas space heaters, fireplaces and gas stoves for heat,” said Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center. If used in living quarters these sources can potentially fill the air with carbon monoxide and cause harm. “Be sure all furnaces and hot water heaters are vented properly and that there is no obstruction to the fireplace chimney,” Dr. Marcus added. Other common sources are automobile exhaust from attached or unvented garages and “patched” vent pipes using tape, gum or other substances. Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death. During cold and influenza season carbon monoxide poisoning can easily be confused with those viral illnesses, so prevention of exposure and early detection are important to prevent tragedy.

Dr. Marcus adds, “Since this gas is easily detected with an installed and fully functional carbon monoxide detector, the NJ Poison Experts highly recommend that everyone install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of his/her home.

Life-Saving Tips

1. Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
2. Furnaces and chimneys should be inspected and cleaned every year by a trained professional.
3. Gas appliances must have adequate ventilation so that carbon monoxide will not accumulate.
4. DO NOT heat your home with your stove.
5. DO NOT cook with charcoal indoors.
6. DO NOT bring gas powered equipment, propane stoves, propane lights, or kerosene camping stoves into the house or garage.
7. DO NOT idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.
8. Keep your home well ventilated. If need be, keep a window slightly cracked to allow air flow.

If you suspect Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, Take Immediate Action:

1. If a loved one is unconscious or unresponsive, get them out of the house and call 911 immediately.

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2. Exit the house/building immediately. Do not waste time opening windows to "air" it out; this will delay your escape and cause you to breathe in more dangerous fumes.
3. Contact your local fire department/energy provider.
4. Call the NJ Poison Experts, 800-222-1222, for immediate treatment advice. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call us for fast, free and accurate information.

Remember, help is always available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Call 800-222-1222 to speak with a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages. Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too.

About NJPIES

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit www.njpies.org or call **973-972-9280**.

About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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