

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

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

Media Contacts:  
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

### **Mushroom Bloom on Lawns and in Parks**

- Beware: Toxic Look-A-Likes Can Fool You -

Steven Marcus, MD, Executive and Medical Director,  
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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

(Newark, NJ) – July 23, 2014 — What do a 58 year old seen in the emergency department for severe nausea, vomiting and bloody diarrhea and a 48 year old with vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea have in common? They are two (2) of the latest NJ residents that became very ill after eating mushrooms picked on lawns or growing on the side of a road. They along with 21 children and several more adults make up the 28 patients that ate wild mushrooms and required assistance from the NJ Poison Experts since June 1<sup>st</sup>. So far there have been no deaths as in years past but if this trend continues the risk of death goes up.

Each year, NJ residents find themselves hospitalized after picking and eating wild mushrooms that were thought to be edible. Eating even a few bites of certain mushrooms can cause severe illness. Some symptoms of mushroom poisoning include intense vomiting and diarrhea, damage to vital organs like the liver and even death. NJPIES warns the public to refrain from eating mushrooms they find growing on their lawns or in the wild.

Many kinds of edible mushrooms have toxic "look-alikes." There is no easy way to tell the difference between poisonous and harmless mushrooms. In addition, poisonous and non-poisonous mushrooms can grow side by side. Even experienced mushroom pickers can be fooled at times, so this warning needs to be given and taken seriously. Children must be taught never to put wild plants, berries, nuts, or mushrooms into their mouths.

If an exposure should occur; remove any remaining parts of the mushroom from the victim's mouth and place those fragments and all mushrooms that are in the immediate vicinity of the incident into one or more paper bags (NOT plastic!). ***IMMEDIATELY*** call the NJ poison experts at 1-800-222-1222. The poison center will arrange for an expert to identify the mushroom and the center can then provide advice on management depending on the mushroom's identification. A digital photograph should be taken of the mushroom(s) in question. It helps to take a picture of the mushroom next to other objects such as a coin, ruler, etc. to provide a sense of scale.

Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms. If an exposure occurs, it's good to know help is just a phone call away. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the **NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222)**. "Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. "Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes."

**Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature like Hurricane Sandy. Call 800-222-1222, chat via [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org), or text in at [8002221222@njpies.org](mailto:8002221222@njpies.org) to contact a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

We are social. Join us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

**Real People. Real Answers.**

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### **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.

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](http://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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