

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

MEDIA ALERT

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

Valentine's Day Dangers -- Keep Your Kids and Pets Safe --

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – February 8, 2016 — Valentine's Day is a day to celebrate love and appreciation for the special people in our lives by giving gifts, candies, flowers, balloons, stuffed animals, etc. Although these items bring us joy, we must be extremely careful with them around our children and pets.

"When planning your Valentine's Day celebration, it is important to be mindful that some of the items given can bring serious harm and even cause death to the pets and/or small children in our lives," said Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director of Drug Information at the NJ Poison Center. "Since it is easy to overlook some of these dangers, we put together a short list for everyone so they can increase their awareness of the dangers," said Ruck. "Help us prevent as many exposures as we can by passing this list around to everyone you know."

If the unthinkable happens on Valentines Day, it's good to know the NJ Poison Experts are just a phone call away at 1-800-222-1222 any time of the day or night. Experts are available around the clock.

"A relatively new risk to children and pets that caught the attention of poison experts around the country involves e-cigarette devices, hookah pipes and liquid nicotine," said Ruck. Consumers must be aware that these items may contain very high doses of nicotine in enticing colors, aromas, and flavors – increasing the likelihood that pets and small children will be drawn to them. "If using or giving these products as gifts, please use them responsibly by keeping them out of sight and reach of children and pets."

Potential Dangers

- Alcohol - If accidentally swallowed by pets and/or small children, leftover cocktails can be fatal! Always empty beverage glasses and place them out of reach of curious pets and children.
- Candy - Make sure to keep chocolate, cocoa, candy and anything sugarless (contains artificial sweetener like Xylitol) out of reach of pets. Ingestion of any of these can be toxic causing vomiting, diarrhea, seizures, or even death depending on the item and dose.
- Cigars, Cigarettes, E-cigarettes, Hookah Pipes, and Liquid Nicotine – All of these items pose serious risk of poisoning to pets and young children. Remember to empty all ashtrays after your celebration. Pets as well as children have been known to eat cigars and cigarette "butts." There is enough nicotine in these tobacco products to be considered poisonous to them. Any product containing nicotine should be kept out of sight and reach of both children and pets. When disposing these products, be sure to dispose of them properly to prevent exposure from the residue or liquid left in the container.

- Decorations – Pets, especially cats, are drawn to anything shiny that moves around. Ribbon and string used on gifts also pose risk. Be sure to throw ribbon and string out after opening gifts. These items have been known to be a choking hazard, anchor in the stomach making it impossible to pass through the intestines, or get caught in the intestines and cause a perforation.
- Candles - Place candles in secure areas where they cannot fall or be knocked over by children and pets. Pets' fur as well as children's hair and clothes can easily catch on fire. Use non-flammable holders and remember that small amounts of melted wax can become a choking hazard to small children.
- Food - Keep products containing yeast (baked goods) and fruit cakes with raisins and currants away from your furry friends.
- Wrapping Paper - DO NOT burn in the fireplace. They may contain toxic metals like lead, may burn at such a high temperature that they may prove dangerous to the fireplace, or send sparks out into the room causing a potential fire.
- Plants – Mixed flower arrangements often contain lilies which are poisonous to cats. Even just nibbling on the flower can cause a fatal outcome (kidney failure). If giving an arrangement to someone with a cat, be sure it does not contain any lilies. If it does, remove and throw away the individual flower(s). Even putting the arrangement up high may not help. Cats jump and leaves die and fall to the ground. Better to be safe than sorry by removing the lilies completely.
- Button Batteries and Magnets - These items are easy to swallow and can cause serious harm to pets and children. If ingested, button batteries can cause serious burns. Some magnets may pose a serious risk. If two or more of the so-called rare earth magnets are ingested, they can attract one another internally, resulting in serious damage to the stomach or intestines.

In the event of an exposure, don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. 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). Experts are always here to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Calls are free and confidential. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

Time is of the essence in many situations since poisons and medicines may act very quickly. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes. Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter (@NJPoisonCenter) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Stay tuned for more poison prevention week safety information.

Real People. Real Answers.

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 Emergency Medicine 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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