

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

MEDIA ALERT

Media Contacts:

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

Severe Allergy Season Predicted Sufferers Beware

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – April 21, 2014 — We are expecting one of the worst spring allergy seasons in history due to all the wet weather. Allergy sufferers know the symptoms...sneezing, watery itchy eyes, nasal congestion, runny nose, etc. This has led sufferers to go to their local pharmacies/supermarkets to seek medication to relieve the discomfort associated with allergies. The NJ Poison Experts encourage consumers to exercise caution when taking allergy medications or giving them to a child. There is a common misconception that non-prescription (over-the-counter/OTC) medications are not dangerous because they are sold without a prescription. Such medications may, in fact, produce serious side effects which may cause harm to those taking them.

The poison experts want to raise awareness about the potential effects from OTC and prescription allergy medications. Adverse effects range from agitation to drowsiness and/or stomach upset to liver damage.

Before you reach for any allergy medication, either OTC or prescription, we recommend the following tips to prevent problems related to medication use:

- *Almost all allergy medications can cause drowsiness and/or a relaxed state of mind.* These side effects can cause operating equipment and driving to be dangerous. Also use caution when riding a bicycle and walking in the street. Be particularly careful if the individual seeking to use these medications is on other medications, particularly those which may also cause drowsiness. Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages while taking any medication, including allergy medications. Mixing the two could prove problematic.
- *Allergy medications may interfere with vision.* Blurring of vision may occur and interfere with driving and similar skills. Experiencing pain in the eyes or feeling as if there is something in the eye may be an indication of a serious side effect of many allergy medications and the need for medical evaluation.
- *Select medications that treat **ONLY** the symptoms you have.* For example, use a decongestant if you are congested, but only use decongestants with cough suppressant if you have a cough as well.
- *Watch for duplicate active ingredients in products taken at the same time.* Many times medications with different names and even different intended purposes contain the same active ingredients. Taking these together, even if each is in the intended dose, can result in serious overdose.
- *Remember that more does not mean better.* Don't take medicines longer or in higher doses than the label recommends. If symptoms persist, it is time to see a doctor.
- *Be particularly careful about dosage recommendations.* With liquid medications, it is best to use a measuring spoon or a dosing cup marked in teaspoons, not a common kitchen spoon.
- *Follow the product label instructions.* Be sure to put on a light and your glasses if needed to read the label carefully before each dose is taken or given to someone else.

- *Avoid adverse drug interactions.* If you are currently taking any prescription or non-prescription medications, ask your pharmacist or health care provider for assistance in choosing non-prescription medications. If this is not possible, questions can be directed to NJPIES at **1-800-222-1222**.

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 Dr. Steven Marcus. "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 Superstorm Sandy. Call 800-222-1222, chat via www.njpies.org, or text in at 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) 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.

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 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.