

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

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

### **Media Contacts:**

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

## **Father's Day Celebrations Don't Put Food Poisoning on the Menu**

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*Available for Interviews*

**(Newark, NJ) – June 15, 2015** — Treating your dad, father-in-law, grandfather, or uncle to a nice home cooked meal on Father's Day? As you plan, shop, prepare, and cook, keep in mind there is always a risk for food poisoning when cooking at home. The best course of action is to brush up on food safety basics before heading into the kitchen. Food poisoning can spoil his day just as easily as a burnt meal.

Quick facts about food poisoning:

- It is generally a mild illness that most commonly results from poor food handling.
- It usually occurs hours after eating contaminated food and can include nausea, fever, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea.
- Once symptoms develop they may last from several hours to several days.
- It can be a serious issue for those in poor health, infants and children, the elderly, and pregnant women.

There is no way to be sure food is safe to eat unless you follow basic food safety practices from start to finish. Poison center experts suggest following the tips below to ensure a safe Father's Day celebration. Remember not to prepare or cook food if you are feeling sick or have any type of respiratory illness or infection. This can put your guests at risk of becoming ill.

### Clean:

- Wash hands with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds before preparing any foods and especially after handling raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs. You can estimate the proper time to wash by slowly singing the happy birthday song twice while you wash your hands.
- Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item. Never reuse utensils without careful cleaning; this is a source of contamination.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.

### Separate:

- Keep foods that will not be cooked from coming into contact with raw eggs, meat, poultry, or seafood. The same goes for kitchen utensils – do not use any kitchen utensil that has touched raw eggs, meat, poultry, or seafood on foods that will not be cooked.
- Store raw foods below cooked food in the refrigerator so that raw food cannot drip into cooked food and contaminate it.
- Keep cutting boards separate. Use one board for raw meat, poultry, or seafood. Use another for board for raw fruits and vegetables.
- Do not put cooked meats or other foods that are ready to eat on any unwashed plates that held any raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, or their juices.

#### Cook:

- Follow the cooking instructions on food packages.
- Use a food thermometer to confirm that cooked foods (meat, poultry, and fish) have been properly cooked by reaching a safe internal temperature. Visit [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov) for proper temperatures of cooked foods.
- Keep food hot after cooking (at 140 °F or above) to prevent bacteria from growing.
- When reheating sauces, soups, and gravies, be sure to bring it to a rolling boil.
- Eggs can be contaminated with Salmonella. Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Scrambled eggs should not be runny.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs. It is unsafe!

#### Chill:

- Avoid overstuffing your refrigerator. To keep foods properly chilled, cold air must circulate inside.
- Defrost/thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave—never on the counter at room temperature. Be sure to cook thawed foods immediately.
- Allow enough time to properly thaw food. In the event you do not have enough time to defrost/thaw frozen food, you can safely cook it frozen. Remember to increase your cooking time. Frozen meat or poultry will take 50% longer to cook than if it was defrosted/thawed.
- Check to make sure both refrigerators and freezers are set at proper temperatures. Refrigerators set at or below 40°F and freezers set at 0°F.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods such as leftovers, pies, etc. within two hours. Cut this time to one hour during the summer months.
- Leftovers should be used within three to four days, unless frozen.
- When in doubt, throw it out. Don't taste any food that looks or smells questionable.

#### Safe Grilling:

- Store charcoal lighter fluid in locked cabinets, out of sight and reach of children and pets. Swallowing lighter fluid can lead to serious poisoning.
- When taking cooked food off the grill, do not put it back on the same plate that held raw food.
- Turn meats over at least once to cook evenly.
- Do not partially grill meat or poultry and finish cooking later.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure meats have reached the proper internal temperature. The color of meat and poultry is not a good indicator of safety.
- Never use your grill indoors, in a garage, shed, etc. Carbon monoxide poisoning can result.

Be sure to keep these tips in mind as you cook your Father's Day meal. "If you should run into a potential problem at any point during the cooking process, we are here to help. Every minute counts in poisoning situations so do not take chances by either waiting until symptoms occur or waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet," said Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., NJ Poison Center.

"I would like to call your attention to some concerns we have for children unrelated to food poisoning," said Ruck. Fuel oil (most commonly used in patio torches) is a dangerous poison if ingested. The oily liquid can easily get into the lungs potentially causing pneumonia, lung damage, and even death. Even small amounts can be life-threatening. Since fuel oils are often the same color as beverages, like apple juice, children often confused the two, setting the scene for a perfect storm. Be mindful that many of the lamps/torches containing these oils are not child-resistant and must be kept away from both children and pets. When not in use, store the lamps and extra oils, the same way you would store any chemical - Lock them up and keep them out of the sight.

During adult celebrations, alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, mixed drinks, liquor, etc.) are often part of the menu. Ruck said, "Alcohol can be a deadly poison to children because they are small and their livers are not fully developed." If ingested, the alcohol can lower their blood sugar potentially causing seizures, coma, and even death. Remember to always empty beverage

glasses and place them out of sight and reach of curious children. The same advice goes for your pets; alcohol can make them very sick as well.

If you have questions about food preparation/handling, foodborne illness, or any poison exposure it's good to know help is just a phone call away. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes. A quick response by both the caller and the poison center expert can make a difference in preventing serious injury and saving lives. 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**

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

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. Stay tuned for more poison prevention week safety information.

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### **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](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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