

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

NEWS RELEASE

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

State's Poison Center Warns of Increased Risk of CO Poisoning during Heating Season – Schedule a Service Call Today for your Heating System –

Steven Marcus, MD, Executive and Medical Director
Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director, Drug Information and Professional Education
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – November 2, 2015 — “It is crucial to have your heating system (boiler/furnace), water heater, fireplaces, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a professional to ensure that all are working and venting properly in order to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning,” said Steven Marcus, MD, executive and medical director of the NJ Poison Center. “I strongly urge you to add this to the top of your fall “to do” list because the well-being of you and your family depend on it.” It is also the time to check that your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are working and have fresh batteries.

Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is a serious concern to the NJ Poison Experts (1-800-222-1222) as we enter into the 2015 heating season. Although everyone is at risk for CO poisoning at any time throughout the year, the fall/winter heating season tends to be the time when we hear about more exposures.

Carbon monoxide is called the “Silent Killer.” It is a gas that gives no warning – you can’t see it, smell it or taste it. 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, symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can easily be confused with symptoms of viral illnesses like the common cold and the flu.

“The most effective way to prevent exposure to this deadly gas is to be sure your heating system and any source of heat that uses gas, oil, wood, kerosene, etc., are working properly and gases are ducted outside,” said Dr. Marcus. To help determine if there is a leak, install battery-operated (or backed-up) carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home and near every sleeping area. You want to catch the leak before it turns into a serious problem.

“Not only should batteries on the detectors be changed at least twice a year, the actual detectors themselves should be replaced every 7 year so be sure to check the manufacturer’s date on the detectors in your home now.” An easy way to remember to check your detectors is to do it at the same time you change your clocks for daylight saving time.

Prevention and early detection are crucial in preventing poisoning injury and even death from carbon monoxide. The NJ Poison Experts offer these life saving tips below to reduce your risk of CO poisoning. “We encourage you to share these tips with your friends and family.”

1. If you don't have any carbon monoxide detectors or the ones you do have are not working properly, install/replace them immediately.
2. Gas appliances must have adequate ventilation so that carbon monoxide will not accumulate. If need be, keep a window slightly cracked to allow air flow.

3. Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
4. Never use your stove to heat your home.
5. Only use generators outside, at least 25 feet from both your and your neighbor's home, doors, or windows.
6. Do not bring generators, pressure washers, grills, camp stoves, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, carport, camper, boat cabin, or tent – or even outside near an open window or door.
7. DO NOT cook with charcoal indoors.
8. DO NOT idle a car in a closed garage. Once you pull in, immediately turn off the engine.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, take immediate action:

1. If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, take immediate action! If a loved one is unconscious or unresponsive, get them out of the house and call 911 immediately.
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.
5. Do not waste time looking for information on the internet about carbon monoxide poisoning. Call us for fast, free and accurate information.

Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms occur. While family members and internet searches may have some answers, these are not the best ways to get immediate help. 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).

Calling the poison center is always the fastest way to get the professional help or information you need in potential poisoning cases. Time is of the essence in such situations so program your cell phone with the Poison Help number (800-222-1222) and post it somewhere in your house, like on your refrigerator or near your home phone.

Help is available to NJ residents anytime day or night, even on weekends and holidays. Remember, services are fast, free, confidential, and multilingual. Call 800-222-1222, chat www.njpies.org, or text 8002221222@njpies.org; the hearing impaired may also use their TTY and call 973-926-8008.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

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. 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.

###