



The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System

Serving New Jersey Since 1983

Designated regional poison center
for New Jersey by New Jersey
Department of Health and Senior
Services and the American
Association of Poison Control
Centers

PRESS RELEASE

Date: April 2009

Contact: Alicia Gambino, MA, CHES
973-972-9280

Possible Swine Flu Pandemic Emerging in the U.S.

Warning Against Misuse of Over-the-Counter Cough & Cold Medications

(Newark, NJ) Cough and cold preparations are most typically discussed in the winter months, but with the recent outbreak of swine flu, it's important to remind the public of how to use these preparations safely. A common misconception is that these medicines can not possible be dangerous because they are sold over the counter.

The New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) would like to raise awareness that misuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines can lead to unintentional poisonings. The misuse can result in adverse effects, ranging from stomach upset to excessive sleepiness or even liver damage.

We recommend the following tips to prevent poisonings related to medication use:

- 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.
- 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 converting dose instructions. With liquid medications, it is best to use a measuring spoon or a dosing cup marked in teaspoons, not a common kitchen spoon.
- Many times medications with different names and even different intended purposes contain the same active ingredients. Taking these, even if each is in the intended dose, together can result in serious overdose.
- 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**.

Call the Poison Help Hotline number at **1-800-222-1222** to speak with a healthcare professional for any questions regarding swine flu (prevention, interactions and side effects of recommended treatment, etc.) The hotline is accessible 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Services are free and confidential. **Remember, Help Is Just a Phone Call Away!**

For Press follow-up, please call 1-800-222-1222

located at University of Medicine & Dentistry of New Jersey

140 Bergen Street, Suite G 1600, Newark, NJ 07101-1709

Telephone: 973-972-9280 Fax: 973-643-2679

Website: WWW.NJPIES.ORG