

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

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

Media Contacts:

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

### **Santa's Checklist for Injury Prevention**

-- Safety is the Best Gift --

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

*Available for Interviews*

**(Newark, NJ) – December 18, 2015** — While winter is a wonderful time of year, it is also the peak time of year for distractions; creating the “perfect storm” for injuries related to common holiday household items.

“Since poison centers often see an increase in unintentional poisonings around this time of year, we encourage you to take a moment to review the potentially dangerous items below and think about ways you can lower your family’s risk of injury during the holiday season,” said Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director of Drug Information at the NJ Poison Center.

Fortunately with some added awareness and following a few simple tips, most injuries can be prevented and the holidays can remain joyous and safe for everyone. Add “prevention” to your gift list for loved ones and guests this holiday season.

**Alcohol (beer, wine, liquor, cocktails)** - If accidentally swallowed by children and/or pets, leftover cocktails can be fatal! Alcohol affects children and pets differently than it does adults, so even ingesting a small amount can be very toxic. Always empty beverage glasses and place them up high and out of reach of curious children and pets.

**Artificial Snow Spray** - This product can irritate lungs if inhaled. To avoid injury, follow the directions. Be careful when spraying artificial snow. It may also strip paint off of painted surfaces.

**Button Batteries and Magnets** - These items can be found in watches, toys, games, flashing costume jewelry, singing greeting cards, remote control devices, etc. They are easy to swallow and can cause serious harm to children and pets. If ingested, button batteries can get stuck in the throat or stomach causing serious burns and even death. If two or more magnets are ingested, they can attract one another internally, resulting in serious tissue damage to the stomach or intestines. Injury can occur if these are placed in the nose or ear. Parents must be aware of the dangers and keep products containing button batteries and magnets securely fastened or out of sight and reach.

**Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning** – During this time of year, signs of CO poisoning can be easily mistaken for symptoms of the flu or common cold which is why it’s vital to have your heating systems and fuel burning appliances inspected regularly by professionals to ensure proper

ventilation. Carbon monoxide often referred to as the “silent killer” is a colorless, odorless gas that poses a serious health concern. Be sure to install CO detectors on every level of your home. Regularly replace batteries.

**Candles** - Place candles in secure areas where they cannot fall or be knocked over by children and pets. Use non-flammable holders and remember that small amounts of melted wax can become a choking hazard to small children. Be aware that liquid candles” are not candles at all, but lamp oil. See below for more information on lamp oils.

**Cigars and Cigarettes** - Empty all ashtrays after your holiday gathering. Children and pets have been known to eat cigars and cigarette “butts.” There is enough nicotine in these tobacco products to be considered poisonous to children and pets.

**Fireplace** - Before lighting any fire, remove all decorations from the area. This will remove any risk of starting a fire. Check to see that the flue is open and keep a screen before the fireplace the entire time a fire is burning. Prevent carbon monoxide exposures by having chimneys and flues inspected regularly by a professional to ensure proper ventilation. Never burn wrapping paper or other debris in a fireplace!

**Fire Salts** - Attractive when added to fires for the colorful flames they produce. These salts can produce serious stomach problems if ingested. They need to be kept out of reach from children.

**Food** - All foods should be prepared and cooked properly to avoid food poisoning. Food poisoning usually occurs two to six hours after eating the contaminated food and can include nausea, fever, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea. Depending on the exact type of food poisoning, how your body reacts to the toxin and the amount of contaminated food that was eaten, symptoms may last from several hours to two or three days. Food poisoning can be serious for people in poor health, as well as the very young and the elderly. For tips on food safety, please click on the link <http://bit.ly/1WXKJ2F> to read our November press release.

**Holiday Plants** - Many plants can be potentially harmful if eaten or handled improperly so decorate for the holiday season using non-poisonous plants if possible. Holiday plants which can produce some toxic effects, mainly gastrointestinal, include Holly, Jerusalem Cherry, Mistletoe, Boxwood and a variety of species of the Yew. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not considered toxic when consumed in small amounts. Call the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222 to find out what other plants are considered to be toxic.

**Lamp Oils** - Lamp oils pose serious danger. Children are often confused by these oils because they look and smell just like a beverage. If ingested, the oils can get into the lungs and cause pneumonia and even death. Many of the lamps containing these oils are not child-resistant and must be kept away from 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 reach of children.

**Medicines** - Be sure to keep a safe, locked place for relatives and holiday visitors to store any medications they may be carrying with them. Never leave any medications in purses, nightstands, or in the bathroom where they are accessible to children.

**Pets** - Make sure to keep chocolate, cocoa, candy and sugarless gum that contains Xylitol, yeast bread dough, leftover fatty meat scraps, fruit cakes with raisins and currants, alcohol and illicit drugs out of reach of your pets. Ingestion of any of these can cause serious harm and even death. Be sure to keep all wires tucked away.

**Toy Safety** - Be cautious of antique or foreign-made toys! They may contain lead and be hazardous to children. Check for chipping or worn paint before allowing children to play with them. Be sure to review toy recall notices before purchasing. For toy safety information call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772.

**Tree Ornaments** - Ornaments resembling foods are as attractive as the real thing. A child or a dog may think a fake apple or cookie looks appetizing and attempt to eat it. If eaten, they can cause problems, so avoid using them for decoration. Take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, especially in homes with small children and pets.

**Wrapping Paper** - **DO NOT burn in the fireplace.** Wrapping paper burns quicker and much hotter than wood causing a potential for a home fire. The flames can cause small pieces of the paper to break off and fly around landing on furniture, Christmas trees, or head up the chimney and ignite the flammable material inside the flue. Be mindful that colored paper may contain high levels of toxic metals like lead; when burned it may produce toxic fumes and carcinogens.

**Tinsel** - If you have a cat, tinsel should not be used to decorate. Cats tend to think it is a fun toy to play with since it shiny and gets their attention, but it can cause serious injury to your pet. If ingested, it can wrap around the tongue or anchor itself in the stomach making it impossible to pass through the intestines.

The best way to be prepared for poisoning emergencies this holiday season is to program the Poison Help line, 1-800-222-1222, into your mobile phones, and post it in a visible place in your home. Calling the NJ Poison Center is always the fastest way to get the professional help or information you need in potential poisoning cases.

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).**

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.

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](http://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](http://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.**

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#### **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](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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