



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



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## ***NEWS RELEASE***

### **Steps to Prevent Children from Being Poisoned by Medications in their Homes**

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

*Available for Interviews*

**NEWARK, N.J. — September 16, 2011 —** A study discussing the dramatic increase in the number of children being poisoned by unintentionally ingesting medications was [published online](#) today in the Journal of Pediatrics. This study shows that in recent years, the number of unintentional poisonings in children has significantly increased. These poisonings have resulted in increased emergency room visits.

The study revealed that children are getting into medications they find around their home and the homes of friends and relatives. Medications are easily accessible because generally speaking, most people leave them on top of kitchen countertops, night stands, dressers, and in unlocked medicine cabinets and pocketbooks. Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director of the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System and Professor of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School, recommends the following safety tips to prevent unintentional pediatric medication poisonings.

- Remove all prescription and over-the-counter medicines from accessible medicine cabinets and other storage areas (bedside stands, kitchen cabinets, etc.) and **LOCK THEM UP**.
- When friends and family visit, make sure all of their medications (prescription, non-prescription, herbal, vitamins and dietary supplements) are **LOCKED UP**.
- Child resistant caps are effective only if used correctly. Be sure to replace caps tightly after using a medication.
- Make sure to properly discard medicines that are not being used. Check expiration dates frequently on all over-the-counter and prescription medications kept in the home. Recent recommendations include combining expired or leftover medicines with used coffee grounds, kitty litter, or something else bad-tasting to children and animals. Place this in a coffee can with a lid, and discard with your household trash.
- Keep medicines (as well as vitamins and diet supplements) in original containers to reduce the chance of mistaking one pill for another. Do this at home **AND** when traveling. It would be best to lock up all medications in a medication lockbox!

Keep the telephone number for the poison center easily available. Program it into your telephones. If you suspect a poisoning, call the NJ poison experts immediately at 1-800-222-1222 for treatment advice because an emergency room visit may be unnecessary. The hotline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! Remember, Help Is Just a Phone Call Away!

#### **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 the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, its state-of-the-art center is located on the school's Newark campus.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies should call the bilingual toll-free hot line, 1-800-222-1222, 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 UMDNJ**

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation's largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state's three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than two million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.

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