



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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

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

Preparing for the Holidays

-- NJ Poison Experts Help Residents Avoid Food Poisoning --

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

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – November 16, 2012 — On the heels of Superstorm Sandy and a Nor'easter, comes Thanksgiving in the garden state. This is a special time to give thanks and focus on family especially after the devastation NJ residents suffered in the last few weeks. Just as the NJ Poison Experts were there to assist callers during and after the recent storms, they are here now ready to answer your holiday food-related questions and/or concerns.

"Oftentimes, the best part about the holidays is spending time with family ... and eating of course!" said Dr. Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D. of the NJ Poison Center. "However, even for an experienced chef, cooking a feast for a large group can be quite daunting. It's important to follow safe food handling and cooking guidelines so that your guests leave with full bellies and not food poisoning."

According to Dr. Ruck, food poisoning is generally a mild illness that most commonly results from poor food handling practices. 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, for the very young and the elderly.

Handling food safely can help ensure a happy holiday season. Practicing basic food safety preparation and storage are the best ways to protect against food poisoning. Experts at the NJ Poison Center offer the following recommendations to prevent food poisonings:

- Wash hands with soap and warm running water for at least 15 to 20 seconds before preparing any foods and especially after handling raw meat, poultry, fish or eggs.
- Keep preparation and storage areas clean; this includes countertops, stovetops and refrigerators.
- Wash utensils between each use. Never reuse utensils; this is a source of contamination.
- Do not defrost meat or poultry on the counter at room temperature. Thaw it in the refrigerator or microwave instead.
- Use a meat thermometer to confirm that meat, pork and poultry are properly cooked; visit www.foodsafety.gov for proper temperatures.
- Do not prepare food if you are sick or have any type of nose or eye infection.
- Store raw food below cooked food in the refrigerator so raw food cannot drip into cooked food and contaminate it.
- Use separate cutting boards for meats, poultry and fish.
- Follow the directions on food packages.

And to ensure that the leftovers will be just as good the next day, properly seal and store leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible. Leaving perishable foods, including meats and dairy products, out at room temperature longer than two hours significantly increases the risk of food poisoning. Throw food away if you are unsure how long it has been sitting out.

"Be sure to keep these tips in mind as you cook and entertain family and friends this holiday season," Ruck said. "And if you have questions about food preparation/handling, foodborne illness, or any poison exposure call the NJ Poison Experts 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 1-800-222-1222."

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

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)**. They are always here to help with accidents or questions involving medicines, chemicals or household products, etc. Help is available in over 150 languages; 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year. Program the Poison Help line (800-222-1222) into your cell phone and post it near your home and office phones too. There are no silly questions and our trained medical staff are always available to answer a question, quell a fear, provide advice, or intervene to get emergency services on site and prepped to provide the needed protocol in the fastest response time. When in doubt, check it out - Prevention is truly the best possible medicine.

Real People. Real Answers.

Call to Action – Help is Just a Phone Call Away

NJPIES leaders urge medical professionals, parents, educators, caregivers and the general public to call the toll-free poison center hot line, 800-222-1222, with any poison related question as well as for non-emergency questions regarding medications, household products, plants, environmental contaminants, or other poisons. The hotline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may also chat or text in using our website, www.njpies.org. **Real People. Real Answers.**

The NJ poison experts recommend putting the number in all family cell phones as well as programming it as a speed dial number on landlines (home and office). In addition, prominently post the number near all phones in the home and office.

Follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Be poison smart - share poison prevention tips with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

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. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus.

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 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 2 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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