

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

NEWS RELEASE

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

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year – Let's Make It Injury Free Safety is the Best Gift!

Diane P. Calello, 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) – December 13, 2016 - For many of us, Christmas and Hanukkah are long-awaited holidays. Whether you are looking forward to the decorations, presents, or time spent with loved ones, it's important to remember that safety should come first. For most of us, the hectic nature of preparing for the holidays (cooking, entertaining, home decorating, etc.) distracts us from paying attention to what's happening around us and in our homes. This is the perfect time for mishaps and injuries to occur. Even though the "to do" list seems to grow as the days count down, let's not forget about the importance of prevention – being aware of common hazards that occur during the holiday season.

"The holidays are an exciting time of year so let's make it an injury free one," said Bruce Ruck, Director of Drug Information at the NJ Poison Center. "I encourage you to take a few moments to learn more about the possible dangers and to think about how you can lower the risk of unintentional injuries in your household," said Ruck.

1. Household

Poison centers often see an increase in unintentional injuries around this time of year. Fortunately unintentional injuries can be prevented and the holidays can remain joyous and safe for everyone.

- **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.
- **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.
- **E-cigarettes devices and liquid nicotine** - Liquid nicotine exposures continue to concern poison center specialists. The liquid contains concentrated nicotine which is harmful if swallowed. Even small amounts can be fatal to small children and pets. Keep these products and their refill liquids locked up, out of sight and reach.
- **Medicine** - Be sure to offer a safe, locked, out of sight place for relatives and holiday visitors to store any medicines (over-the-counter, prescription, vitamins, herbal or dietary supplements) they may be carrying with them. Never leave medicines in purses, on nightstands or counters, or in the bathroom where children and pets can easily get them.
- **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.

2. Gift Giving

Prevention is the best gift you can give your loved ones and guests this year.

- **Wrapping paper** – Some types of wrapping paper may contain toxic metals like lead, may burn at such a high temperature that they may prove dangerous to the fireplace, or flake and send sparks out into the room causing a potential fire. Under no circumstance should you burn wrapping paper.
- **Toys** – Antique toys and those made outside of the United States may contain lead or other toxic substances. Look for chipping or worn paint before letting children play with them. Be sure to look for toy recalls before buying new toys. For more information about toy recalls, contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 <https://www.cpsc.gov>. Also keep in mind that many toys have small parts which young children and pets can easily swallow and choke on.
- **Disc batteries** – These are usually 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. Besides being a choking hazard, these batteries can cause serious burns if stuck in the throat or stomach and may even cause death.
- **Small magnets** – If a child consumes two or more magnets, they can attract each other, resulting in serious harm to internal organs. You must get help immediately.

3. Decorations

Decorations are just one way to show the holiday spirit. Deck your halls with prevention and safety.

- **Tree ornaments** – Children or pets may mistake ornaments for food, especially if they look like candy or cookies.
- **Spray-on snow** – Follow instructions when spraying artificial snow onto a tree or other decorations. If inhaled, this product can irritate the lungs.
- **Tinsel** – If you have pets, we suggest not using tinsel to decorate. Tinsel can easily be swallowed and get stuck in the intestines.
- **Plants** – Holiday plants are a fun way to add cheer to your home, but some can have toxic effects. Be mindful of 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.
- **Candles** – While they can be warm and even romantic, candles can be dangerous. 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 cause burns as well as become a choking hazard to small children and pets. Be aware that liquid candles are not candles at all, but lamp oil (see below).

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. Time is of the essence in many situations since poisons and medicines may act very quickly. Calling the NJ Poison Center is always the fastest way to get the medical help or information you need to prevent further injury.

In the event of an exposure, don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet. 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)**.

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.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter (@NJPoisonCenter) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

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

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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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