

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

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

Media Contacts:

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

**'Tis the Season to be Aware**  
-- Safety is the Best Gift --

Steven Marcus, 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 12, 2014 — Although the “to do” seems to grow as the days count down to the celebrations, be sure to keep “health and safety” at the top. The hectic nature of preparing for the holidays (cooking, entertaining, home decorating, etc.) takes over and often times distracts us from paying attention to common household hazards. Poison centers often see an increase in unintentional poisonings around this time of year. 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.

“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 moment to educate yourself on the potential dangers and think about how you can lower the risk of unintentional injuries in your household. Prevention is the best gift you can give your loved ones and guests this holiday season,” said Ruck.

**Alcohol-** If accidentally swallowed by children and/or pets, leftover cocktails can be fatal! Always empty beverage glasses and place them out of reach of curious children and pets.

**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.

**Toy Safety-** Be cautious of antique or foreign-made toys! They may contain lead and be hazardous to children. For Toy Safety call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772.

**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.

**Fireplace:** Before lighting any fire, remove all decorations from the area. Check to see that the flue is open. Keep a screen before the fireplace the entire time a fire is burning.

**Button Batteries and Magnets-** These items 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. If two or more magnets are ingested, they can attract one another internally, resulting in serious damage to the stomach or intestines.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Artificial Snow Spray:** This product can irritate lungs if inhaled. To avoid injury, follow the directions.

**Lamp Oils-** Lamp oils pose serious danger. Children are often confused by these oils because they look 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.

**Wrapping Paper- DO NOT burn in the fireplace.** They 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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/1xDpx1e> to read our November press release.

**Fireplace-** Have chimneys and flues inspected by a professional before each heating season. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that poses a serious health concern. Carbon monoxide poisoning is often referred to as the "Silent Killer."

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)**.

"Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies. 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," said Ruck.

Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature. Call the hotline to speak with a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

**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](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Share what you learn with your family (including children), friends, and coworkers.

**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 Preventive Medicine and Community Health 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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