

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

## NEWS RELEASE

Media to contact:  
800-222-1222  
800-962-1253 if outside NJ

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### Summer Safety in New Jersey Prevent a Trip to the Hospital

**(Newark, NJ)** – Summer days should be spent outdoors enjoying the sunshine and warm weather not inside the emergency department of your local hospital. From common household items to poisonous plants to heat-related illness, poisonings happen anywhere, anytime and to anyone.

“Safety is no an accident, it’s a choice,” says Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the [NJ Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School’s Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “Since most poisonings are preventable, it’s important to focus your attention on identifying and preventing potential hazards both at home and outdoors.

Sunburn, unsafe swimming and sweltering temperatures should not be the only concerns when heading to the pool on a bright sunny day. “Some pool and hot tub chemicals, which are necessary to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria in the water, can be dangerous and must be used and stored properly. For example, chlorine can cause eye irritation, breathing problems and lung injury if used in high concentrations or in poorly ventilated enclosed spaces,” says Calello. “There are a few things to keep in mind when handling chlorine – it should never be ingested; avoid shaking containers to minimize dust, fumes and splashes; open containers outdoors if possible; and do not touch chlorine with bare hands.

If you are swimming in a heated indoor pool, be cautious of how you are feeling. People die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning from faulty indoor pool heaters. If you suddenly have a headache, feel nauseous or dizzy, vomit, etc., immediately get outside to fresh air and call the Poison Control Center for help, 1-800-222-1222.

#### Prevent Summer-Related Poisonings

- Use caution while being in the sun - some medications can greatly increase the risk for heat-related illness and/or severe sunburn even when using sunscreen.
- Do not cross-contaminate! Cooked foods should not be placed on plates or in containers that previously held raw meat, poultry, fish, or seafood without washing them with soap and water first.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning happens in the summer. Never use a grill indoors (in a garage, shed, camper, tent, etc.). Also, swim and play away from boat engines.
- Use EPA approved insect repellent (DEET at least 20% or more) to prevent the spread of disease from mosquitoes and ticks (Zika Virus, Lyme Disease, and West Nile Virus).
- When friends and family visit, lock up all their medicines (prescriptions, over-the-counters, dietary/ herbal supplements, vitamins). Children, teens and pets die every year because medicines are easily accessible.

- Store charcoal lighter fluid and lamp/torch oil in locked cabinets, away from food and drink and out of sight and reach of children and pets. Swallowing these products can lead to serious poisoning and even death.
- Use caution when drinking alcoholic beverages while also taking medicine. They may interact and cause serious health consequences.
- Do not pick plants/mushrooms to eat from your backyard or fields. Many people suffer serious health effects and even die each year from mushroom poisoning.
- When giving/taking medicine, use a dosing device (syringe or cup), not a household spoon meant for eating. Using a household spoon increases the risk for overdose.
- Clean up immediately after parties. Cigarette butts, alcohol and liquid nicotine can be dangerous to both children and pets. It does not take much for them to get very sick.
- Hot cars can kill within minutes. Never leave children or pets alone inside parked cars. Leaving the windows down does not prevent temperatures inside the car from rising to deadly levels.

"As your family enjoys the summer, I want you to be proactive by remembering these safety tips," says Calello. "The state poison control center will be here to respond to your calls if you need our help." Every minute counts in poisoning situations so do not guess, make the call immediately to the poison center, 1-800-222-1222. "Our experts are not only a great resource in the event of an emergency, but also when you have questions or concerns."

**If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or seizing, call 9-1-1 immediately.**

### **Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

Stay Connected: Facebook ([@NJPIES](#)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](#)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

**Real People. Real Answers.**

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#### **Available for Media Interviews**

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Managing Director, New Jersey Poison Control Center, Rutgers NJ Medical School's Department of Emergency Medicine

#### **About NJPIES**

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) is New Jersey's only poison control center. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer free consultation through hotline services (telephone, text and chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. In addition, it tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the New Jersey Department of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NJPIES' confidential services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. When needed, NJPIES responds to other emergent health issues by expanding hotline services.

NJPIES is designated as the state's regional poison control center by the New Jersey Department of Health and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It is a division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Health Sciences in Newark. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health, NJ Hospitals and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents should save the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, in their mobile phones and post the number somewhere visible in their home. NJPIES is also available via text [8002221222@njpies.org](mailto:8002221222@njpies.org) and chat [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org).

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### **About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: [njms.rutgers.edu](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

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