

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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Two Hotlines One Poison Control Center NJ Poison Control Center Assists Residents During the Pandemic

(New Jersey, NJ) – The NJ Poison Control Center at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School serves as the state’s primary defense against injury and death from intentional and unintentional poisoning exposure. The State’s poison control center is actively involved in all aspects of poisoning and public health, from prevention to treatment to education. Callers can contact the center’s experts 24/7 by calling 1-800-222-1222.

In 2020, the NJ Poison Control Center provided medical information and treatment advice to nearly 50,000 callers. Along with providing potentially life-saving information and advice to members of the general public, healthcare professionals, first responders, school officials, and many more – the poison control center provides valuable public health surveillance on poison-related exposures and trends in New Jersey.

The doctors, nurses, and pharmacist at the NJ Poison Control Center specialize in medical toxicology. Through its expertise and capabilities, the poison control center manages most poison exposures over the phone, requiring no hospital visit or medical costs. In addition, healthcare providers in emergency departments and hospitals also rely on the center’s experts to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of their patients.

Last month marked a year since the COVID-19 Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center opened its phone lines to assist the State with its response to the emerging pandemic. The NJ Department of Health collaborated with the Poison Control Center to provide a 24/7 medical and public health resource for COVID-19. Since establishing and operating the coronavirus hotline, poison center staff have assisted nearly 90,000 additional callers in need of information, medical advice/guidance, and services. Callers receive unbiased, up-to-date, and accurate information.

“Our staff of doctors, nurses and pharmacists is frequently called upon to provide information and assistance to health agencies as they respond to emerging public health concerns,” says Diane Calello, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). “The experience of our staff and organizational structure of our program uniquely qualifies our center to operate emergent health hotlines in tandem with our Poison Help Hotline.”

“Over the years we’ve assisted the Department of Health in operating many emergent health hotlines, but none as life-changing and challenging as COVID-19. The pandemic brought to light the power of collaboration among State health officials, healthcare systems, and public health agencies in the face of unprecedented crisis. As COVID-19 continues to march through New Jersey, the hotline will continue to serve as a first point of contact for callers in need of vital health and safety information.

Common calls to the COVID-19 Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center:

1. I had close contact with someone who just found out she has COVID-19 (tested positive for the virus). How long do I need to stay home/quarantine? Should I get tested?
2. Where can I get free testing?
3. How do I disinfect a space after a sick person finishes his/her isolation?
4. What treatments/therapeutics are available for COVID-19 infection?
5. I am eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. How do I make an appointment?

Common calls to the Poison Help Hotline:

1. My toddler took an unknown amount of children’s acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol). Do I need to take him to the emergency room?
2. My 2-year-old was playing with a game that has magnets and now there are magnets missing. Are magnets dangerous if swallowed?
3. My roommate had a fight with someone and then swallowed pills from our medicine cabinet. What should we do?
4. I think I accidentally took my ADHD medicine twice. What should I do?
5. My mom thought she could make a more powerful cleaner by mixing cleaning products we already had. Now she’s dizzy and acting funny. What should we do?

New Jersey residents with poison-related questions or emergencies should call the poison center’s Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222; Text (973-339-0702); Chat via the Poison Center’s [website](#). Residents with COVID-19 medical concerns should call the COVID-19 Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center at 1-800-962-1253. Both hotlines are accessible 24/7. Services are confidential/private, and free of charge to all callers.

For other COVID-19 related concerns: Call 2-1-1; Text: NJCOVID to 898-211 to receive alerts; and visit [NJ's COVID-19 Information Hub](#). The [NJ Vaccine Call Center](#) at 1-855-568-0545 is available to pre-register individuals, answer questions, provide contact information for sites, and look up registrations.

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.

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

Lewis S. Nelson, MD, Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine at Rutgers NJ Medical School

About New Jersey Poison Control Center / NJPIES, 1-800-222-1222

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES), known to the public as the New Jersey Poison Control Center, is the state's primary defense against injury and deaths from intentional and unintentional poisonings. It 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 at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers Biomedical and 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.

Hotline staff (physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists) provide free, telemedicine consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention practices, drug interactions and overdoses, food poisoning, environmental chemical exposures, animal/insect bites and stings, plant and other outdoor exposures, carbon monoxide and lead poisonings, and more. NJPIES' services are free, confidential/private, available 24/7, and help is available in any language. Call 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702; [Chat](#). Stay Connected: [FB](#) / [Twitter](#) / [Website](#)

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.

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