

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

For Immediate Release  
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### Navigating Daily Life While Protecting Your Health

**UPDATE: State's coronavirus hotline assists nearly 50,000 people to date. The COVID-19 Hotline at the New Jersey Poison Control Center provides callers with important medical information and advice for their COVID-19 concerns. Center staff have provided the public and healthcare professionals a 24/7 coronavirus resource since the pandemic began in New Jersey. If you have a medical-related COVID-19 questions or concerns, call our medical and public health professionals at 1-800-962-1253.**

**(New Jersey)** – The Garden State was one of a few states to successfully keep new infections and community spread to a minimum while other states saw drastic increases in new infections and deaths. As summer continued and many New Jerseyans mistakenly believed COVID-19 was no longer a threat to their health, our state began to see an uptick in new infections, hospitalizations and deaths. When infection rate increases so does the transmission rate. This means the virus is in our daily environments and continues to spread to others in our communities. Increased rates remind us that when given the opportunity to thrive, this virus spreads easily, quickly and with little to no warning.

"It is understandable that residents are anxious to return to "normal" life amidst the life-altering pandemic of recent months, says Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., managing director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Department of Emergency Medicine](#). "But, in order to do so, new infections and community spread must continue to remain low. Returning to daily life while protecting our health can be done, but only if we continue to work together. Participating in daily infection prevention measures while also assessing your individual and family risk of illness during activities and events are key factors in keeping our communities on the path to recovering from this pandemic," continues Ruck.

Preventing people from getting sick and slowing the spread of the virus is all we can do to keep communities safe until there is an approved vaccine, cure, or treatment. Make no mistake, COVID-19 continues to pose a significant risk to the health and well-being of all residents. Public health officials recommend you and your loved ones consider the following when making the decision to participate in daily activities or events.

**Practice health behaviors that prevent infection** – There is no cure, treatment, or vaccine for COVID-19. The best way to stay healthy is to prevent exposure to infected respiratory droplets which are projected into the air or land on surfaces when talking, laughing, sneezing, coughing, singing, yelling, etc. Simple [prevention measures](#) can greatly reduce your risk of infection and stop the spread of COVID-19.

**Wear a face covering/mask whenever social distancing is not possible** – Distance helps prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others. In the event keeping your distance is not possible, the next best option is to wear a face covering that covers your mouth and nose. Masks have been found to be

incredibly effective in keeping sick individuals from spreading the virus — some recent studies have found that traditional surgical masks may reduce respiratory droplets/particles by as much as 75 percent.

**Know before you go** – In order for recreation/outdoor areas, businesses, and other venues to remain open, they are required to have specific safety protocols in place to protect visitors, customers, and staff from COVID-19 infection. It's important to be prepared; be aware of the establishment's protocols before you plan your outing. Face coverings/masks are required in all indoor and outdoor areas when social distancing is not possible (except when eating or drinking). If you plan to travel, check [travel advisories](#), restrictions, and suggested quarantine guidelines for the place you are visiting and also for when you return back to your state. It is important to stay updated on this information as it changes often.

**Assess your risk of infection** – Certain settings and activities may increase the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19. Higher risk activities: indoors, close contact for long periods of time, lots of people in small space, no distance between people. Less risk activities: outdoors, no close contact, less people in a big space, more distance between people.

**Have the 'COVID talk'**– COVID-19 can quickly, effectively, and silently spread through communities with no warning given the following factors — it's spread through respiratory droplets and touching contaminated surfaces, the virus has a long incubation period (anywhere from 2-14 days) which means it has lots of time to spread to others, and there are many asymptomatic patients (showing no symptoms of illness but still spread the virus). Before gathering/spending time with people you do not live with (friends, family, coworkers, neighbors, etc.) take time to discuss how to best prevent infection; i.e., gathering outdoors, stay 6 ft apart; wear a face covering if you cannot distance, avoid large gatherings, refraining from hugging/touching, etc.

**Cooperate with public health contact tracers** – When someone tests positive for COVID-19, he/she may have spread the virus to others without knowing it. Those individuals could now be infected with the virus and putting their loved ones at risk as well as others in their community. This is how we get widespread infection across the state. [Contact tracing](#) is the key to stopping the spread of COVID-19 and protecting your loved ones and neighbors. If you are called by a contact tracer, it is so important that you answer the phone. Contact tracers will let you know about the risk to you and your family and provide you with information to protect your loved ones and your community. Contact tracers will not ask for social security numbers, bank or credit card information, health insurance information, immigration status, or criminal history.

**Get all information from credible public health sources** – Since COVID-19 remains an emerging health crisis, information changes day to day. Be sure you are getting and sharing credible information. Misinformation is dangerous to the health and well-being of communities. Information shared via social media, word of mouth, or by media outlets may be incorrect or outdated. In New Jersey, credible public health resources were established to provide the general public and healthcare professionals with important COVID-19 information; the Coronavirus Hotline at the New Jersey Poison Control Center at 1-800-962-1253 for medical-related information; 2-1-1 for general COVID-19 information; text **NJCOVID** to **898-211** to receive alerts; and visit [New Jersey COVID19 Information Hub](#) for FAQs and more.

"It's important to start looking ahead as COVID-19 will again overlap with cold and flu season," says Ruck. "If we continue with the prevention measures used to flatten the curve of COVID-19 infection, there's a chance that this year's cold and flu season may impact our communities less than previous years. As it

turns out, the steps taken to prevent COVID-19 will also prevent other illnesses spread through close contact, such as the common cold and the flu. We have a real opportunity to prevent two serious respiratory infections; now is not the time for us to get complacent.”

### **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

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](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

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