

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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COVID-19 Update:

NJ Poison Control Center Assists Over 39,000 Through State COVID-19 Hotline

(Newark, NJ) – As the State of New Jersey strategically progresses towards reopening and recovering from the devastating effects of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), New Jerseyans must not lose sight of the fact that COVID-19 still poses a very real threat to the health and safety of all. As people begin adjusting to the “new normal,” it is important to remind the public that the State’s COVID-19 public health resources are still available to provide accurate, up-to-date information, 24/7. Residents can call the Coronavirus Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center for medical-related information (1-800-962-1253); call 2-1-1 for general information; text NJCOVID to 898-211 to receive alerts; and visit [New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub](#) for FAQs and more.

Since its inception, the Coronavirus Hotline at the NJ Poison Control Center has provided medical advice and assistance to over 39,000 concerned callers. The hotline has been part of the State’s COVID-19 response since late January when Governor Phil Murphy announced its opening. Poison Center staff are available 24 hours a day as a reliable resource to both the general public and health professionals. Medical and public health professionals are able to provide; credible information to alleviate fear and dispel rumors, up-to-date guidance for ill persons and the worried well, and best-practices for prevention. The hotline’s services are confidential (private), free of charge, and help can be provided in any language – 1-800-962-1253.

“As our state continues its strategic [plan](#) of easing restrictions and allowing the public to participate in more activities, we must not forget our shared responsibility in preventing the continued spread of COVID-19,” says Diane Calello, MD, executive and medical director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#), Department of Emergency Medicine. “Make no mistake, COVID-19 remains a serious threat to the health and safety of all as there is ongoing community spread/transmission in New Jersey, in the United States, and around the World. Do not allow misinformation to replace credible, public health practices as we continue the fight against this novel coronavirus.”

As of now, there is no cure or vaccine for COVID-19, therefore all residents must do their part to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their community by following every day prevention actions and sharing in the responsibility for stopping the spread of COVID-19. Remember, our actions affect the lives of others. Below are simple ways to significantly lower the risk for COVID-19.

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Hand sanitizer should not replace washing hands. Avoid using methanol-based hand sanitizers as they are highly toxic if ingested and can cause serious health effects and even death. Toxic effects can also occur through inhalation and absorption through the skin.
- Keep unwashed hands away from your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs can enter your body this way.
- Stay away from anyone who is sick or showing symptoms.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve. Be sure to fully cover your mouth and nose to prevent spreading germs to others around you.
- Keep away from others not in your household (do not live with) – 6 feet/2 meters apart which is about two arm lengths away from the other person (social/physical distancing). It is recommended that you also practice this distancing while outdoors and when eating with people you do not live with.
- Stay home while you are sick and distance yourself from others in your household.
- Wear a face covering while in public places to protect others in case you have the virus and do not have symptoms. Wear a face covering when preparing and cooking food for others who do not live in your household.
- Choose activities that are outside instead of inside (indoor dining, worship services, home parties/get-togethers, etc.) and stay away from crowded areas.
- Sharing food, drinks, cups or utensils with others can easily spread germs. Use disposable items whenever possible.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces daily (e.g. tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, phones, tablets, touch screens, remote controls, keyboards, handles, desks, toilets, sinks). Be sure to store [cleaners and disinfectants](#) safely as these products can cause serious poisoning injury if misused.

As we continue to reintroduce activities to daily routines, it is important to make informed decisions as to your level of [risk](#) when deciding to participate in activities. Simply put, your risk for COVID-19 significantly increases when you spend a lot of time, with a lot of people, indoors in small/tight areas or spaces. Remember, minimizing your risk also minimizes the risk for others. For more COVID-19 information and resources, [click here](#).

Are you a New Jersey resident looking for COVID-19 medical advice and assistance? Call the Coronavirus Hotline at the New Jersey Poison Control Center at 1-800-962-1253. Help is available 24 hours a day; services are confidential (private), free of charge, and help can be provided in any language.

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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