

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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:
800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Let's Talk Holiday Cooking Keep Food Poisoning off the Guest List

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Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – November 18, 2015 — Holidays are about spending time with family ... and of course eating! However, even an experienced chef can find cooking a holiday feast for a large group of loved ones stressful and even overwhelming. Our advice - start early so you can make sure your guests have a safe holiday meal!!

With the start of the holiday season just a couple of weeks away, it is never too early to begin planning and preparing for your family's Thanksgiving feast. Waiting until the last minute often causes stress and leads to taking short cuts when it comes to food safety practices. Starting early will ease anxiety and help lower the risks of your guests becoming sick at the hands of the chef. Food poisoning can spoil the holidays just as easily as a burnt meal.

Quick facts about food poisoning:

- It is generally a mild illness that most commonly results from poor food handling practices.
- It usually occurs hours after eating contaminated food and can include nausea, fever, vomiting, stomach cramps and diarrhea.
- Once symptoms develop they may last from several hours to two or three days.
- It can be a serious issue for those in poor health, infants and children, the elderly, and pregnant women.

"Forgetting about food safety is a recipe for disaster," said Steven Marcus, MD, medical executive director of the NJ Poison Center. "First, do not prepare food if you are feeling sick or have any type of respiratory illness or infection. This puts your guests at risk of becoming ill."

Preventing food poisoning is actually quite simple if you remember a few simple steps. Following these steps will protect your family and friends from leaving your table with more than just full bellies. A good rule of thumb – "When in doubt, throw it out. Don't taste any food that looks or smells questionable." Dr. Marcus said.

Food Safety Steps¹

- **Clean:** Wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and countertops after each use. Use soap and warm water.
- **Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate. Separate raw meats, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods.
- **Cook:** Cook to the right temperature. Always use a food thermometer. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Set out food only when it is time to eat, food left out in excess of 2 hours can become dangerous to eat.

¹ <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/index.html>

- **Chill:** Refrigerate/freeze food promptly. Follow the two (2) hour rule – leftovers should be stored in fridge or freezer within two (2) hours of being cooked.

Be sure to keep these tips in mind as you cook and entertain family and friends this holiday season. “If you should run into a potential problem at any point during the cooking process, we are here to help.” Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms occur. While family members and internet searches may have some answers, these are not the best ways to get immediate help. 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).

“Our poison experts are also able to answer questions about food preparation/handling, foodborne illness, or any poison exposure,” said Dr. Marcus. Calling the NJ Poison Center is always the fastest way to get the professional help or information you need in potential poisoning cases. Time is of the essence in many situations so having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes.

We urge everyone to program their cell phone with the Poison Help number (800-222-1222) and post it somewhere in their house, like on the refrigerator or near the home phone. One day it might save you back.

Help is available to NJ residents anytime day or night, even on weekends and holidays. Remember, services are fast, free, confidential, and multilingual. Call 800-222-1222, chat www.njpies.org, or text 8002221222@njpies.org; the hearing impaired may also use their TTY and call 973-926-8008.

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](https://twitter.com/NJPoisonCenter)) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc. Stay tuned for more poison prevention week safety information.

Real People. Real Answers.

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 Emergency Medicine 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 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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