

Carbon Monoxide Death Reported in New Jersey

Colorless, Odorless...the Silent Killer

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Life-Saving Tips

- Open flues when fireplaces are in use
- Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned annually
- Test carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms to make sure they work
- **DO NOT** idle the car inside the garage
- **NEVER** use charcoal indoors or in areas with inadequate ventilation
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up central heating systems like the furnace every year
- Gas appliances must have adequate ventilation so that carbon monoxide will not accumulate
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near your furnace and/or water heater, as well as on every floor
- **NEVER** use charcoal or gas stoves to heat your home
- **DO NOT** use gas powered equipment like portable generators, propane stoves, charcoal grills in the home or garage

IF YOU SUSPECT CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION:

- Get out of the house and
- Contact your local fire department immediately.
- Do not waste time opening windows or trying to "air" out the house/building; which will delay your escape from possibly dangerous fumes.

NEWARK, N.J. — October 17, 2011 — Over the past weekend, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) received its first report of death from carbon monoxide poisoning for this heating season.

Fall is the season that brings changing leaves, shorter days, and brisk mornings and nights. As the fall temperatures roll in, many of us close up the windows and light the fireplaces, wood stoves, or turn on the furnaces. During the colder months, the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES) warns the public about their increased risk of exposure to poisonous carbon monoxide (CO) gas. During the 2010/2011 heating season the NJ poison experts received over 160 calls for assistance with carbon monoxide related issues.

Extreme caution is urged when using sources of carbon monoxide such as unvented kerosene and gas space heaters, charcoal burners, gas water heaters, wood stoves, gas stoves, and gasoline powered generators. Other common sources are blocked chimneys which are supposed to vent furnaces and fireplaces and automobile exhaust fumes from automobiles warming up in attached or unvented garages. Poorly maintained equipment can set the stage for disaster.

Since carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas that can deprive the body of oxygen, the NJ poison experts encourage everyone to install carbon monoxide detectors in his or her home, especially near sleeping areas and near the furnace and/or water heater. Carbon monoxide poisoning is a real danger and should be taken seriously. Exposure can produce headaches, sleepiness, fatigue, confusion and irritability at low levels. At higher levels, it can result in nausea, vomiting, irregular heartbeat, impaired vision and coordination, and death.

Call to Action

NJPIES' leaders urge medical professionals, parents, educators, caregivers and the general public to call the toll-free poison center hot line, 800-222-1222, with any questions about carbon monoxide poisoning or for any poisoning emergency. Even after a serious poisoning, symptoms may not appear until many hours later. **DO NOT** wait until symptoms appear. The NJ poison experts are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All services are free and confidential.

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 Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, it has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus.

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 UMDNJ

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey is the nation's largest freestanding public health sciences university, with more than 5,500 students attending. The state's three medical schools, a dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health-related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health are housed on five campuses — Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. Annually, there are more than 2 million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at the campuses. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a level I trauma center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a mental health and addiction services network.