

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

NEWS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

Lead Poisoning: Permanent but Preventable – Lead Poisoning Remains a Concern for NJ Families –

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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

Available for Interviews

(Newark, NJ) – **October 18, 2016** — A 2 year old child goes to his doctor for a routine check-up. During the visit, his mom tells the doctor that she is worried that he does not speak as well as his brothers did at his age. This causes his doctor to check the level of lead in his blood, which is found to be high. In response, the local health department discovers that he lives in an older house with peeling, lead-based paint.

Childhood lead poisoning is considered one of the most preventable diseases among young children yet thousands of children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that “at least 4 million households have children living in them that are being exposed to high levels of lead.”¹ Approximately half a million U.S. children ages 1-5 are living with lead levels high enough to cause serious and permanent damage.²

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (October 23-29, 2016) reminds us all of the serious health effects lead poisoning has on children. This happens when children swallow or breathe in lead. The effects can be very harmful to young children (ages 6 and under) and unborn babies. Lead can pass from mother to unborn child and cause harm. Pregnant women must make sure to avoid contact with lead. Even low levels of lead have resulted in harmful effects.

Once the health effects of lead poisoning have taken place they may never go away. Too much lead (lead poisoning) may harm a child’s brain and nervous system, causing problems with learning and paying attention, slower growth and development, hearing and speech trouble, and behavior problems. Since there is no safe level of lead in children, it is extremely important for parents/guardians to take lead poisoning seriously.

Call to Action: Stop your child from coming into contact with lead **before** they develop health problems that may never go away even after getting treatment. Once a child is said to have lead poisoning, he/she must be separated from the source of lead and treated immediately to prevent even more damage!

The NJ Poison Experts remind you that lead poisoning is preventable. Major sources of lead exposure include lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust (especially dust from renovating or repairs) and soil from deteriorating homes/buildings built before 1978. In addition, lead may be found in items such as candy, make up, imported foods, pottery and folk medicine made in other countries.

¹ CDC. [Lead](#). September 2016.

² Ibid

"As we become more aware of lead poisoning, we find more and more sources in our environment", said Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the New Jersey Poison Center. "Chipping lead-based paint in older homes remains the most common source for young children, but we also have to investigate other possibilities, like drinking water, imported foods, cosmetics, and medications. If your home or building was built before 1978, chances are it contains some lead-based paint on the walls, window sills, door frames and woodwork.

The best way to prevent damage to your child's health is to stop their exposure to lead before it causes harm. Below are some simple ways to stop your child from coming into contact with lead:

1. Test your home for lead if you have young children or pregnant women in your household. Remember to also do this when purchasing an older home (built before 1978), or when doing any repairs or renovations. If you have lead paint in the home, be sure to hire a professional certified to remove lead.
2. Test your child for lead poisoning. Even if young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them anyway since the effects can be hard to notice. A blood test is the only way to measure the amount of lead in your child's body. Health professionals recommend lead screening for children ages 1 and 2.
3. Learn how to prevent lead poisoning. The NJ Poison Experts are available 24/7/365 in the event that you or a loved one is exposed to lead or have questions/concerns regarding lead poisoning. Call 1-800-222-1222 for free, expert advice

Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms occur. If an exposure happens, it's good to know help is just a phone call away. 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). "Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Bruce Ruck, PharmD, Managing Director of the NJ Poison Center. "Having a poison expert give you real-time instructions for your specific situation can make all the difference."

Help is Just a Phone Call Away!

We are social. Join us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/njpies) and Twitter (@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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