

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey
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NEWS RELEASE

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Media to contact:

800-222-1222

800-962-1253 if outside NJ

One of the Most Dangerous Objects in Your Home

State's Poison Control Center Warns Residents

Warning: Children who swallow button (disc) batteries are at significant risk for suffering serious, even deadly internal burns and injuries, in addition to choking. Parents and caregivers must be aware of this common and frequently overlooked danger around the home. Such batteries are often hiding in plain sight. Swallowing these coin-sized batteries is a medical emergency. Call the Poison Control Center right away for treatment advice, 1-800-222-1222.

(Newark, NJ) – 'Tis the season for button batteries! These small, disc shaped batteries are typically found in many common products – children's toys, games, flashing costume jewelry, and singing books; holiday decorations, calculators, watches, remotes, hearing aids, key fobs, flashlights, and many other products. "Most parents and caregivers are unaware that the toys and everyday items their young children play with, contain these potentially dangerous batteries," says Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the [New Jersey Poison Control Center](#) at [Rutgers New Jersey Medical School](#)'s Department of Emergency Medicine. "It does not take very long for a coin-sized battery to begin to cause serious injury once it gets stuck inside the body; internal chemical burns can result quickly, producing serious, even permanent damage to the esophagus and other internal organs."

So far this year, the New Jersey Poison Control Center has referred 29 children to hospital emergency departments for swallowing button batteries. Along with these batteries, high-powered magnets may cause devastating, internal damage

if swallowed. “Not only are magnets a choking hazard, but if two or more magnets are swallowed together, they can attract one another inside the body, causing a blockage or twist in the intestines. A single magnet may pass through just fine, but two or more is asking for serious trouble,” says Calello. To date, the state’s poison control center has consulted on 40 cases where children were exposed to such magnets.

It is important to take notice of home products that are missing these “bite-sized” batteries or magnets. This could be the first indication that a young child or pet has swallowed such items. “Whether you see your child swallow any of these items or suspect he or she did; immediate medical attention is required,” says Calello. “Do not wait for symptoms to develop – irreversible damage may have occurred by the time signs appear. This was the case a few years ago in New Jersey when a young child died after ingesting a button battery.”

Pets can suffer the same serious, even fatal health consequences of swallowing button batteries and magnets. If a suspected ingestion occurs, call your veterinarian or local animal hospital immediately. Ingesting these items is a medical emergency for pets as well.

Safety is no accident, it’s a choice. It’s far easier to prevent a tragedy than to treat one. Check the battery compartments of common household products; if the compartments are not secured by screws, prevent your child or pet from having access to those products. The same goes for products with high-powered magnets. “Assuming “dead” batteries cannot cause harm puts our children and pets at risk for these potentially life-threatening exposures. Dead batteries still have enough charge to burn through tissue, causing considerable damage when swallowed,” says Calello.

For further information, read Dr. Calello’s interview with [WebMD](#).

If you suspect illness, do not wait until symptoms occur or waste time looking up information on the internet. Contact your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 to get the immediate help you or a loved one needs. Center experts are health professionals available 24/7 for emergencies, questions, concerns, or information. Services are free, confidential, and a language line is available (over 150 languages). New Jersey residents can reach their center in the following ways: call (1-800-222-1222), [text](#), or [chat](#).

If someone is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or seizing, call 9-1-1 immediately.

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

Chartered in 1983, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System (NJPIES) is New Jersey's only poison control center. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses, and pharmacists offer free consultation through hotline services (telephone, text, and chat) regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites, and more. In addition, it tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs, and vaccines to monitor for potential public health issues and provide data to the New Jersey Department of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NJPIES' confidential services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year. When needed, NJPIES responds to other emergent health issues by expanding hotline services.

NJPIES 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 of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located at Rutgers 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.

New Jersey residents should save the Poison Help number, 1-800-222-1222, in their mobile phones and post the number somewhere visible in their home. NJPIES is also available via text 8002221222@njpies.org and chat www.njpies.org.

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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.