

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

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Media Contacts:

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

### **Suicide Drug Overdoses in NJ Children as Young as 10-14 Years Old**

**-- No Longer Surprising to the Poison Experts --**

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director  
Bruce Ruck, Pharm.D., Director, Drug Information and Professional Education  
New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

(Newark, NJ) – August 30, 2016 — 14 year old had fight with dad and takes an overdose (OD) of acetaminophen, a 10 year old tried to kill himself by taking an OD of antihistamines, a 13 year old tried to kill herself by taking a large quantity of mom's medication ... these calls have become all too common to the experts at the NJ Poison Center.

According to Bruce Ruck, PharmD, DABT, Managing Director of the NJ Poison Center, "the health professionals of the poison center have assisted in the management of close to 200 children from 10-14 years of age with drug overdoses."

Cases just like these are expected to continue throughout the year. "Now that school is back in session, we expect a significant uptick in calls regarding young teens trying to harm themselves by overdose," noted Diane Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center.

Suicide in children is not as rare as one may think. Parents/guardians, teachers, clergy, and school administrators must heed the warning and be on the lookout for signs that a child is struggling and may be considering suicide. "As you can see by our statistics, the age of the suicidal patient is becoming younger and younger, which is quite alarming," said Dr. Ruck. Since there is no law requiring hospitals/healthcare facilities to report overdoses to the poison center, he says, it is very likely that the poison center is only capturing a small fraction of these cases compared to the true number of suicide overdose cases.

"There was a time not too long ago when the school of thought was to just keep medicines up high and out of reach. But we know this is not enough. Keeping medicines (prescription, over-the-counter, dietary, herbal, vitamins) locked up when not in use is a start, because teens will access household medications for suicidal or recreational use," said Dr. Calello. "Being aware of the behaviors of your pre-teen and teenager can prevent a real tragedy".

**“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” — Benjamin Franklin**

In the event of an exposure, don't waste valuable time. If someone has collapsed, stopped breathing, or convulsing/seizing call 911 immediately, otherwise call us (NJ Poison Center) at 1-800-222-1222. Calls are free and confidential. Help is available 24/7 in more than 150 languages.

Every minute counts in poisoning situations so do not take chances by either waiting until symptoms occur or looking up information on the Internet. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes. A quick response by both the caller and the poison center expert

can make a difference in preventing serious injury and saving lives. Save the Poison Help Line (800-222-1222) in your cell phone and post it somewhere visible in your home.

**Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

We are social. Join us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://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.**

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**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](http://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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