NEWS RELEASE

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 over­ whel­ ming. Our­ ad­ vis­ e ­ start­ early­ so­ you­ can make­ sure­ your­ guests­ have a­ safe­ holiday­ meal!!

With­ the sta­ rt of­ the holi­day sea­ son just­ a­ cou­ ple­ of­ weeks­ away, it is­ never too­ early­ to­ begin­ plann­ing and­ pre­ par­ ing for­ your­ fam­ ily’s Thanksgiving­ feast. Wa­t­ ing un­ til­ the last­ min­ ute of­ ten­ causes­ stress­ and­ leads­ to­ tak­ing­ short­ cuts when­ it­ com­ es to food­ safety pra­ c­ tices. Star­ ting early­ will ease­ an­ xi­ et­ y and­ help lower­ the­ risks­ of­ your­ guests be­ com­ing­ sick­ at the­ hands­ of­ the­ chef. Food­ poison­ing can­ spoil­ the holi­days just­ as­ eas­ ily as a­ burnt­ meal.

Quick­ facts­ about food­ poison­ing:

• It is­ gen­ er­ ally a mild­ il­ lness that­ most com­ mon­ ly re­ sults from poor­ food­ han­ dling practices.
• It usu­ ally oc­ curs hours­ after eat­ing con­ tamin­ ated food­ and can­ in­ clude nause­ a, fever, vomit­ing, stom­ ach cramps and­ diar­ rhea.
• Once symp­ tom­s de­ velop­ they may­ last from sev­ eral­ hours to­ two­ or­ three­ days.
• It can­ be a se­ ri­ ous­ is­ sue for those­ in­ poor­ health, in­ fants and­ chil­ dren, the­ elderly, and­ preg­ nant­ women.

"Forg­ et­ ting about food safety­ is a­ re­ cipe for di­ a­ st­ er," said Steven­ Marcus, MD, med­ ical ex­ ecutive di­ rector of­ the NJ Poison­ Center. “First, do­ not pre­ pare food­ if you are feel­ ing sick or­ have any­ type of res­ pi­ ra­ tory­ il­ lness or infec­tion. This­ puts your­ guests­ at risk of be­ com­ing ill.”

Pre­ vent­ing food­ poison­ing is­ ac­ tu­ ally quite­ sim­ ple if you re­ mem­ ber a few sim­ ple steps. Fol­ low­ ing­ these steps­ will protect­ your fam­ ily and friends from leav­ ing 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, cut­ ting boards and coun­ tertops after­ each use. Use soap and warm­ water.
• Separate: Don’t cross-contam­ inate. Sep­ ar­ ate raw meats, poultry, sea­ food and eggs from­ other foods.
• Cook: Cook to the right­ tem­ per­ ature. Al­ ways use­ a food th­ e­ m­ et­ er. 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 be­ come 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](http://www.njpies.org), or text [8002221222@njpies.org](mailto: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](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter ([@NJPoisonCenter](http://@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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