

Making the Holidays Safe

The holiday season is a wonderful time of the year, especially for kids. But it's also a time for accidents and injuries.

Keeping these holiday safety tips in mind will help your family enjoy a happy, healthy season.

Holiday Decorating Safety

- Let kids decorate within their reach with non-breakable items. Hang breakable decorations and ornaments, lightbulbs, and tinsel out of kids' reach.
- Some holiday decorations can be poisonous for children:
 - Plants (like mistletoe, holly, bittersweet, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis) are toxic if eaten.
 - Bubble lights contain a chemical that's harmful if swallowed or gets on the skin. Keep these out of reach even if labeled "nontoxic."
 - Snow sprays are hazardous if the powder is swallowed or the aerosol is sprayed into the eyes or on the skin.

If you think your child was poisoned, call your doctor or Poison Control, (800) 222-1222, right away.

Fire-Prevention Tips

- Make sure that smoke alarms are working before decorating for the holidays.
- Turn off holiday lights before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Keep your natural tree:
 - watered, as a dry tree can more easily catch fire
 - secured in a sturdy stand so that it doesn't tip over
 - away from all heat sources, such as electrical outlets, radiators, and portable space heaters
- If you use an artificial tree, be sure it's labeled "fire-retardant."
- When using candles:
 - Keep lit candles away from Christmas trees.
 - Stay in the room when candles are lit. Supervise kids around them.
 - Make sure all candles are put out before you go to bed.
- Don't overload indoor or outdoor electrical outlets.
- Check wires for fraying or damage.
- Have your fireplace inspected before you light your first fire of the season. A chimney professional can clean your fireplace and ensure that it is safe to use. Use a sturdy fireplace screen when burning fires. Never burn paper or pine boughs, because they can float out of the chimney and ignite a nearby home or your own roof.

If you don't have one already, make a family fire escape plan with two ways out of the house. That way you're prepared in the event of a fire. Choose a place for everyone to meet after they are out of the house.

Food and Drink Safety

A lot of cooking goes on during the holiday season, so be sure to prevent burns:

- Cook on the back burners when you can, and turn pot handles away from the front of the stove.

- Always keep the oven door closed.
- Keep kids away from the oven while you bake or cook.
- Keep kitchen appliances clean to prevent potential grease or other fires.

Other food and drink tips to keep in mind:

- Party favorites like bowls of nuts or candies can be a choking hazard for little kids. Keep these items up and out of reach.
- To prevent food poisoning, practice food safety. Wash hands, utensils, dishes, and anything else that comes in contact with raw meat (including poultry and fish) and raw eggs before and after use. Don't contaminate a serving dish with raw meat. Store leftovers properly and heat them well before serving.

When You Entertain or Have Holiday Guests

- Double-check that all medicines — prescription and nonprescription — are in a cabinet using a safety latch. Kids can climb up using the toilet and countertops to get to items placed up high, so locking the cabinet is key.
- Make sure purses, coats, and bags — yours and guests' — that could contain medicines or other hazards are kept where kids can't get them.
- Alcohol poisoning is a common risk for children during the holiday season. Remove all empty and partially empty cups as soon as possible. Kids copy adults so may drink the beverages they see adults drinking. For children, even small amounts of alcohol can be dangerous.

Choosing Safe Toys

- Choose toys that are safe for each child's age.
- Keep toys for older kids with small parts away from the little ones.
- Be especially careful of electronic toys and remote controls with button batteries, which are very dangerous if swallowed.
- If your kids get a bike, scooter, skateboard, or roller skates, don't forget a helmet and other protective gear.

Staying Safe on the Road

Car accidents and injuries to children increase during the holiday season, so:

- Make sure that kids are buckled up securely during car rides.
- Don't drive after drinking alcohol.
- Be extra cautious when traveling at night on holidays such as Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, when there is a higher incidence of impaired driving.

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