

# Holiday Safety

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Welcome to the holiday season! For many families this means spending times in homes that may not be childproofed. In addition, the change in routines may mean that adults who care for children, especially children with special needs, may be more distracted, increasing the opportunity for accidents to occur.

While nothing can replace your careful supervision, a quick room-by-room health and safety check can make your stay more pleasant.

## Kitchen Area

- ◆ Put poisonous products out of reach.
- ◆ Push heavy appliances to the back of the counter.
- ◆ Store sharp cutlery where children can't reach.
- ◆ Remove tablecloths that can be pulled off along with items sitting on them.
- ◆ Put away refrigerator magnets that could present a choking hazard.

## Bathroom Area

- ◆ Keep door closed at all times.
- ◆ Put poisonous products out of reach.
- ◆ Remove sharp appliances and plug-in appliances.
- ◆ Keep toilet lid down.

## Bedroom Area

- ◆ Make sure the crib your child uses has slats no more than 2 3/8" apart, a snug fitting mattress, and no high posts or decorative cut outs.

## Living Areas

- ◆ Use stairway gates at the top and bottom, if possible.
- ◆ Place childproof plugs in unused outlets.
- ◆ Remove choking hazards like hard candy or nuts.
- ◆ Keep purses out of reach.

## Additional Holiday Tips

- ◆ Watch for lamp cords that can trip youngsters.
- ◆ Low tables that have sharp corners.
- ◆ Plants that may be pretty but are POISONOUS.
- ◆ Holiday decorations that are made to play with.
- ◆ Be aware of pets that are not used to small children.
- ◆ Be aware of water hot enough to scald (above 120° F.)
- ◆ Tie plastic bags in a knot before disposing.
- ◆ Be aware of the dangers of small children eating holiday wrapping paper.

## TIPS ON HOLIDAY DECORATING

Decorating for the holiday season can be a challenge with little ones in the house. Following are some suggestions from parents and parent educators that may be helpful:

- ⇒ Use stick-on bows for the bottom of the tree. Children enjoy rearranging them.
- ⇒ Put the tree in a playpen.

- ⇒ Get a small tree that can be placed on a table and out of reach for children.
- ⇒ Put a gate around the tree and hang unbreakable ornaments from it.
- ⇒ Fasten the tree to the wall or a curtain rod in two places to avoid it being pulled over.
- ⇒ Put breakable ornaments at the top of the tree and out of reach of small hands.
- ⇒ Don't use ornaments or trimmings that resembles candy or other food. A child may try to eat them.
- ⇒ Strings of popcorn or cranberries pose choking hazards.
- ⇒ Dispose of ribbons and wrapping paper as soon as possible. Even short ribbons can pose a choking or strangling hazard.
- ⇒ Immediately put away adult gifts that may be hazardous to young children such as perfume, after-shave, and liquor as well as gifts for older children with small pieces and sharp edges.
- ⇒ Be sure that natural trees are fresh and well-watered daily and that artificial trees are fire resistant. All trees should be placed away from a heat source.
- ⇒ Be sure decorative lights and cords are approved. Look for UL and FM labels.
- ⇒ Do not use candles. Always turn off holiday lights before going to bed or leaving the house.
- ⇒ Do not burn evergreens or wrapping paper in a fireplace or wood-burning stove. They can ignite quickly or cause sparks.

## TIPS ON POISON PREVENTION

**HOLIDAY PLANTS:** A number of plants are poisonous if parts of them are chewed or swallowed; most cause vomiting and diarrhea, but some can also cause severe problems such as convulsions and even coma. **Toxic plants** include:

- **MISTLETOE:** All parts; the small white berries are very toxic.
- **JERUSALEM CHERRY:** The fruit is particularly toxic.
- **YEW:** All parts are toxic.
- **BOXWOOD:** Leaves and twigs are especially toxic.
- **HOLLY:** Berries and all parts of the plant are toxic.

## TIPS ON DECORATIONS

**DECORATIONS:** Children are naturally attracted to decorations. Among those that may be dangerous are the following:

- **Tinsel & Wrapping** paper may contain lead, so these should stay out of children's mouth.
- **Angel Hair** is made of spun glass, and can irritate the skin, eyes, and if swallowed the intestinal tract.
- **Snow Spray Cans** contain a propellant that can cause problems if it is eaten or inhaled.
- **Christmas Tree Ornaments** are usually made of thin metal, plastic, or glass, and they can cause cuts, block a child's airway, or if swallowed damage the intestinal tract.
- **Fireplace and Log Colors** are made of metal salts, which can be toxic if swallowed, even in small amounts.

## POISON CONTROL CENTER

Post the Poison Control Treatment Center number next your telephone. You can contact the Poison Control Treatment Center at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital in St. Louis by dialing 1-800-366-8888. Also check your supplies of syrup of ipecac and activated charcoal, and expiration date.

For additional information, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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