



Seasonal Hazards – Winter Holidays

The holidays are an exciting and busy time of year as parents race to finish shopping, decorating and baking. As the number of days left in the year winds down, be sure to allow plenty of time in the hectic schedule for playtime with your child and sharing holiday traditions as a family.

Nationwide Children's Hospital reminds parents to keep alert to various holiday dangers.

Holiday visits to homes of family and friends can be fun for children but they also may be potentially unsafe. Remember others' homes may not be "childproof." Keep an eye out for breakable items, medications, uncovered electrical outlets and other potential dangers within your child's reach. Also, your "childproof" home might become more dangerous for a few hours, if a visitor leaves her purse and its contents in easy reach of children. There is a potential danger when a guest leaves medicine, an alcoholic beverage or cigarettes within reach.

Avoid the temptation to wait until the next day to clean up after a holiday party. Just one or two ounces of alcohol left in the bottom of a glass can be fatal to a curious, early-rising toddler, and bits of food left on plates can be choking hazards or even cause food poisoning.

Plants typically used for holiday decorating including holly, mistletoe, evergreens and poinsettias can be poisonous depending on the quantities ingested. Eating holly berries, mistletoe berries or evergreens can make children sick with nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or skin rash, and higher doses can be even more dangerous. Poinsettias are minimally toxic but can cause upset stomach if ingested in large amounts. Keep dangerous holiday plants out of a child's reach—pick up fallen leaves and needles, and wrap mistletoe in netting to protect children from fallen berries.

Perfume, cologne, wine make great gifts for adults but are dangerous if swallowed by children. Never leave these Hanukkah or Christmas gifts in reach of children.

You might easily forget about little dangers such as the tiny batteries used in electronics (cameras, calculators and other popular gifts), but these "button" batteries can cause serious health problems for children if swallowed. Store all batteries in a safe place. If a child accidentally swallows a small battery, the first step is to call the Central Ohio Poison Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital **1-800-222-1222**. If the child is experiencing respiratory distress, the poison specialist will recommend an ambulance ride to the hospital.

Holiday baking is a tradition in many families, but young chefs need careful supervision. Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove so they won't tip, and remind children that cookie sheets are hot when they come out of the oven.

Ornaments, tinsel and other decorations fascinate children but can be hazardous. Many are choking hazards, and broken ornaments can cause painful cuts.

Lights and candles are fire hazards. If you use electric lights, look for frayed or exposed wires and make sure no wires are pinched by furniture and no cords run under rugs. Don't use the same extension cord for more than three strands of lights and turn all lights off before going to bed. When lighting candles, remove flammable materials from the area and never leave them burning unattended. The liquid in bubble lights and oil lamps can cause death if ingested by a child. Immediately throw away a bubble light if it is cracked or broken. If you suspect that a child might have swallowed this liquid, please call the Central Ohio Poison Center at Nationwide Children's Hospital **1-800-222-1222**.

Instructions for new toys should always be read to make sure toys are appropriate for your child's age and abilities. Some toys may pose a choking hazard to children younger than 3 years. Toys that are too advanced or too simple can be misused and lead to injuries. Protect young eyes by avoiding toys that shoot objects into the air.

Don't underestimate the importance of a toy's size. Parents can determine if a toy or toy part is a choking hazard for children younger than 3 years of age by placing it in a small parts test device available at many children's toy stores and through mail order companies. Because small balls or ball-shaped toys pose an even more serious choking hazard, these should pass the more rigorous test of not being able to pass through a toilet paper tube that is 1 3/4 inches in diameter. A child's doctor also can provide advice about what kinds of toys are appropriate if parents are unsure.

Adolescents also can be injured by toys. Avoid gifts such as hobby kits and chemistry sets for children younger than 12 years and always supervise children ages 12 to 15. Toys with arrows or darts should have blunt tips made from rubber or flexible plastic.

Your attention is the best holiday gift you can give to your child. Involve children in holiday preparation as much as possible.

Sitters should be selected carefully when children can't tag along to holiday parties. Be sure your babysitter knows whom to call in an emergency – including the numbers where you, fire and police departments, the local poison control center, your child's doctor and other trusted adults can be reached.

To check whether the gifts you are giving or receiving have been recalled, visit www.recalls.gov.

For more information regarding child safety and injury prevention, please call the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital (614) 722-2400, e-mail CIRPinformation@chi.osu.edu or visit www.injurycenter.org.

Contact the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222
24 hours a day to talk with a specially trained pharmacist or nurse about a suspected poisoning

