



Your Health Advocacy and Information Newsletter

Safety Tips for the Holidays

December, 2009

The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips:

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label “Fire Resistant”.
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches, and when bent between your fingers the needles do not break. Also, the trunk butt of a fresh tree is stuck with resin.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk to expose the fresh wood. This allows for better water absorption and will help to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Be sure to keep the tree stand filled with water, as heated rooms can dry live trees out rapidly.



Lights

- Check all tree lights - even if you've just purchased them - before hanging them on your tree. Make sure all bulbs work and that there are no frayed wires, broken sockets or loose connections.
- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to verify that they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. Never pull or tug lights to remove them.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to prevent them from swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a young child to eat them.
- Remove all wrapping papers, bags, paper, ribbons and bows from tree and fireplace areas after gifts are opened. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards or even cause a fire if near a flame.

Toy Safety

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills, and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.



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- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he or she has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully.
- Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1¼ inches in diameter and 2¼ inches long.
- Children can suffer serious stomach and intestinal problems – including death – after swallowing button batteries and magnets. Keep them away from young children and call your health care provider immediately if your child swallows one.

Food Safety

- Be sure to keep hot liquids and foods away from the edges of counters and tables, where they can be easily knocked over by a young child’s exploring hands.
- Wash your hands frequently, and make sure your children do the same.
- Always keep raw foods and cooked foods apart and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing when cooking.



Fireplaces

- Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open.
- Use care with “fire salts”, which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten.
- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Holiday Shopping

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Dress casually and comfortably.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Do not carry a purse or wallet, if possible.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Keep cash in your front pocket.
- Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
- Keep a record of all of your credit card numbers in a safe place at home.

Pets

- Pets’ highly sensitive noses pick up scents before humans can. Therefore, don’t be surprised when your pet is underfoot in the kitchen while holiday goodies are being prepared. Watch those hot containers filled with turkey and ham drippings. The pets can easily tip them over causing severe burns.
- Don’t feed the pets the cooled drippings either. Human seasonings aren’t good for pets; the rich stock and drippings can easily upset pets’ digestive systems.
- Human food is too rich; overfeeding of human food can cause additional health problems and often leads to unsatisfactory eating habits when your pet returns to regular food.
- Do not feed your pets bones, especially poultry bones as they splinter easily.
- Increased activity and visitors during the winter holiday season can upset your pet’s routine. Try to keep your pet on its regular schedule for feeding and exercise and be sure the pet gets plenty of love.

Most importantly, don’t forget to slow down in the holiday rush to *enjoytime* with friends, family and loved ones!