

HOLIDAY POISON SAFETY



Listen up, parents!

The Blue Ridge Poison Center receives more calls about children under the age of 6 than any other age group. The holidays are particularly full of opportunities for young children to encounter poisons. Plan ahead to avoid danger.

Many poisonings happen when the usual household routine is upset, such as when you have guests in your home. Parents and caregivers become easily distracted in all the excitement and chaos. Grandparents and other adults who aren't used to supervising young children may not be aware of the challenges.

Remember: Children act fast, and so do poisons!

SAFETY TIP #1: KEEP ALL MEDICINES AND PRODUCTS IN A LOCKED CABINET, OUT OF THE SIGHT AND REACH OF CHILDREN.

Guests may bring medicines and other personal products into your home and leave them where children can reach them, such as in a suitcase or on a bedside table. Young children are naturally curious and will readily put these products in their mouths. Prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and even personal products like mouthwash or perfume can be harmful to a child if swallowed. Provide your guests with a safe place to store purses, suitcases, and toiletries, and insist they use it.



Relatives and friends who do not have young children have probably not poison-proofed their homes. Keep an extra sharp eye on your children and the surroundings when visiting others.

SAFETY TIP #2: DON'T LEAVE OPENED GIFTS UNATTENDED UNDER THE TREE OR OTHERWISE IN REACH OF SMALL CHILDREN.

Personal products such as bubble bath and cologne, or products like alcohol, are popular gifts. Their sweet fragrance and pretty packaging attract children and can cause serious problems when swallowed. Other gifts may contain tiny parts that could choke a small child if swallowed.



SAFETY TIP #3: NEVER LEAVE ALCOHOL UNATTENDED WHEN SMALL CHILDREN ARE AROUND.



Be sure that glasses containing alcoholic beverages are emptied and washed immediately after use; don't wait until the morning after a party. Ask your guests not to leave their alcoholic beverages unattended if young children are nearby. Store alcohol in a locked cabinet out of sight and reach. Even a small amount of alcohol can be dangerous to a child.

SAFETY TIP #4: KEEP PLANTS OUT OF THE REACH OF YOUNG CHILDREN.

Children are attracted to plants, especially colorful flowers or berries. Soft leaves are easy for little hands to grab and rip off. Fortunately, serious poisoning from plants is rare, because the amount required to cause illness is often more than what a child may eat at one time. Nevertheless, these holiday plants could cause problems:

Choking Hazards

- Holly (*Ilex* species)
- Christmas Berry Tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)
- Evergreens (spruce, pine, fir, etc.)
- Christmas cactus

Mouth or throat irritation hazards

- Christmas Pepper (*Capsicum* species)
- *Amaryllis* or St. Joseph Lily

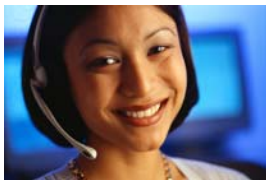
Mildly Toxic

- Mistletoe (*Phoradendron serotinum*)
- Jerusalem Cherry (*Solanum pseudocapsicum*)
- Some bulbs, like Paperwhites (*narcissus* species)

NOTE: Think twice before giving a plant as a gift to a family with very young children.

SAFETY TIP #5: PROTECT FIDO AND FLUFFY, TOO!

Many things that are not harmful for humans to eat are poisonous to pets even in small amounts, including: chocolate, ibuprofen, and lilies. Visit the website of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) for a complete list, poison prevention tips, and other valuable holiday safety tips for pet owners: www.aspca.org.

SAFETY TIP #6: KEEP THE POISON CENTER HOTLINE NUMBER NEAR EVERY PHONE. CALL RIGHT AWAY IF YOU SUSPECT SOMEONE HAS BEEN POISONED: 1-800-222-1222.

The Blue Ridge Poison Center is open 24 hours every day including holidays, nights, and weekends. Your call is free and confidential. The poison center is staffed by nurse specialists and medical toxicologists.

Often, callers can be guided to administer first aid at home without a trip to the doctor!

Call 1-800-222-1222 **right away** if someone:

- Swallowed something they shouldn't.
- Made a mistake with their prescription or over-the-counter medications.
- Breathed a poison.
- Spilled or sprayed a poison on their skin or in their eyes.

THE BLUE RIDGE POISON CENTER WISHES YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES A HEALTHY HOLIDAY AND A NON-TOXIC NEW YEAR!