

what's your Poison?

A quarterly update from the Kentucky Poison
Control Center of Norton Children's Hospital



Plants and Flowers



Poinsettia Plants

While legend holds that these plants are very poisonous, they are actually quite safe to have in a home. However, ingesting a large amount of the plant could lead to nausea vomiting and diarrhea.

Christmas Trees and Greenery

Needles from these trees can be harmful if ingested in large quantities. In small amounts, they can cause stomach upset. The biggest issue with children eating these is that they could be a choking risk.

Holly, Mistletoe, Jerusalem Cherry and Bittersweet

These are all poisonous holiday plants and should not be located where children can reach them. Watch for dried berries that may have fallen to the floor.

Decorations

- Christmas tree preservatives are usually not toxic. Check the label for special ingredients and warnings.
- Many old ornaments are a risk for cuts from broken glass and may be decorated with harmful lead paints.
- Lead can also be found in some tree light wires. Wash hands before and after handling tree lights.
- Angel Hair: Angel hair is finely spun glass, which can be irritating to the skin, eyes, and the throat if swallowed. Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating.
- Older bubble lights contain a small amount of methylene chloride, which is also found in paint removers. Nibbling on an intact light or one "opened" light may cause mild skin or mouth irritation only.
- Icicles or tinsel may cause choking or obstruction, especially in cats or small dogs. Since they may contain lead and tin, they may be toxic with repeated ingestion.
- Snow globes are filled with water or glycerin. The "snow" is calcium carbonate, which is non-toxic. Sometimes the water may be contaminated with bacteria and food poisoning may result. The symptoms of food poisoning include vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps.
- Many snow sprays contain acetone or methylene chloride. This solvent can be harmful when inhaled. Briefly inhaling the spray in a small, poorly ventilated room may result in nausea, lightheadedness and headache. Longer or more concentrated exposures can be more serious. Carefully follow container directions. Be sure to have the room well ventilated when you spray. Once dry, the snow particles are non-toxic.

Other Holiday Hazards

Alcohol

Children cannot process alcohol safely so alcohol poisoning is common in children year-round. During the holidays, be sure to always empty beverage glasses and place all alcohol out of reach of children. Keep in mind that candies made with alcohol, such as bourbon balls, are not safe for children. Keep these candies clearly labeled and out of reach of children.



Disc Batteries



These flat-shaped, coin-like batteries are commonly used in watches, cameras, hearing aids, games and calculators. They may, if swallowed, stick in the throat or stomach, causing serious burns as the chemical leaks out. Also, children may insert these small objects into their ears or nose.

Tobacco & Nicotine Products

Tobacco and nicotine are poisons in all forms. Touching or eating/drinking these products can be very dangerous to children. Children are known to eat whole cigarettes, cigars and the "butts" as well as chewing on e-cigarette cartridges and liquid nicotine e-cigarette refill bottles. Ingestion can result in vomiting, sweating and seizures. Empty all ashtrays at the end of the evening. Keep all tobacco and nicotine products out of reach of children.



Medications & Cosmetics



Be especially careful of medications and cosmetics while visiting or hosting visitors during the holidays. Visitors often leave medicines, toothpaste, perfumes and other products on a nightstand or in the bathroom, making them easily accessible to children. Medications given to seniors often do not have child-resistant closures, allowing children to open them with very little difficulty. Also, purses of visitors may contain medicines and other potentially dangerous items. Remember that the homes of friends and relatives may not be "poison-proof," particularly if children do not usually live there.

Kentucky Regional Poison Control Center

www.krpsc.com

For poisoning information and emergencies: 1-800-222-1222

