



### Take care to prevent Christmas accidents

If you celebrate Christmas, you probably can't think of another holiday more festive. At the same time, it's probably the most hectic and distracting of all the holidays.

In addition to special food preparation, present wrapping and entertaining, the home environment is full of sparkling ornaments, tinsel and flashing tree lights. On Christmas morning, presents, both wrapped and unwrapped, are scattered around the tree and often throughout the house.

And as friends and family arrive to exchange greetings, the generally calm atmosphere bristles with excitement.

Under these conditions, people may push the limits of safety. Keeping some small cautions in mind can prevent serious accidents, especially for children and pets. Here are some things to watch:

**Christmas tree ornaments:** Avoid decorations that look like candy or food. Even the best parent cannot keep up with a

persistent toddler. Tinsel, "bubble lights" and "angel hair" are very attractive to small children. A non-toxic snow spray is a safer option.

**House decorations:** Three common Christmas plants are toxic -- mistletoe, holly berries and Christmas cactus. They should be kept away from children and pets. It is a common myth that the poinsettia is toxic. The Centers for Disease Control indicates that swallowing poinsettia flowers or leaves may cause stomach irritation, but they are not toxic.

In addition, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics offers these tips to keep children safe and the holidays happy.

>> Keep handles of hot pots and pans, as well as knives and other sharp objects, away from children.

>> Keep hot drinks away from table and counter edges.

>> Never hold a child while cooking or carrying hot foods.

>> Partially eaten foods and

alcohol should be thrown away, before children have the opportunity to scavenge.

>> When preparing egg nog or other foods that contain raw eggs, use pasteurized egg mix to avoid the risk of salmonella. And remember, unbaked cookie dough often contains raw eggs.

>> To ensure that your leftovers are kept safe for later nibbling, have adequate clean containers available to store them and plenty of space in your refrigerator or freezer.

>> Use an ice-chest or a box lined with plastic bags to hold canned and bottled beverages in ice. This ensures room in the refrigerator for foods that require lower temperatures.

>> Have a variety of non-alcoholic beverages available to encourage designated drivers to stay dry and to keep excessive drinking curbed.

>> And of course, don't let friends drive after drinking.

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