

POISONology

SAFETY & FIRST AID TIPS FROM THE ARIZONA POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

Resolve to ring in new year safely



There's plenty of advice available on how to avoid a New Year's Day hangover, but it's a little harder to find tips on avoiding the emergency room.

Remember, **all drinks are not created equal**. Many people believe that a 12-ounce can of beer, a five-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce wine cooler and an ounce-and-a-half of liquor contain the same amount of alcohol.

That's not necessarily the case. In fact, some beers can be nine to 10 percent alcohol when people may be accustomed to drinking so-called "light" beers, which are around four to five percent alcohol. Tasty liqueurs can easily be 40 to 50 percent alcohol, and don't taste like liquor. Remember when reading labels on alcoholic products that the proof number is **half** of the alcoholic content.

Carbonated mixers including club soda or tonic water may cause alcohol to be absorbed into a person's system more quickly.

Keep an eye on the children. Children are great at helping themselves to food and drink, and abandoned drink glasses left within reach could contain enough alcohol to seriously harm a child.

Watch out for dogs and birds, too. Both are notorious for helping themselves. Some foods can be highly toxic for pets. Chocolate and caffeine, for example, can be highly dangerous for dogs and birds.

Jell-O shots, or vodka-spiked Jell-O bites, can be fun for adults but inappropriate for child-friendly parties. It's possible that a child could mistake this adult product for something they're used to eating. The results could be extremely dangerous.

Candles and oil lamps can set the festive mood, but they're also attractive for small children. If a youngster gulps scented, brightly colored lamp oil and chokes, it can end up in the lungs, with potentially fatal outcomes. Lamp oil on the skin or in the eyes can also cause extreme discomfort.

In some parts of the country, **New Year's fireworks** displays are part of the fun, and in colder climates, it's tempting to sit in a running vehicle to stay warm. If you do so, make sure there's no risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from leaking or blocked exhaust systems. Keep windows cracked for fresh air, and if anyone starts to feel ill, immediately open the windows fully and turn the engine off.

In warm climates, parties often celebrate on boats. Remember: Exhaust from a running boat engine can also produce toxic levels of **carbon monoxide**.

Finally, **fireplaces, kerosene or propane heaters** can also be a source of carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure there are carbon monoxide detectors and smoke detectors in your home, and replace their batteries to ring in the New Year safely.

If you have other poisoning concerns or questions call the tollfree national hotline at 1-800-222-1222 to reach your local poison center. If you live in Arizona outside of Maricopa County, this number will get you to our experts at the Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center in Tucson.