

# POISONology

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

## Keep the season merry & safe



The old Christmas song says the holiday season is "the most wonderful time of the year," and that can certainly be true. By taking a few precautions, you can focus on family and fun this holiday season - and ideally avoid some of the holiday hazards.

### **Holiday décor:**

Though they're not fatal poisons, poinsettias, if eaten, can cause some stomach discomfort, including vomiting. Definitely keep small children and animals away from mistletoe berries, holly berries, and the fruit of Jerusalem cherry, the leaves and twigs of boxwood and all parts of yew plants. Christmas tree preservatives are usually not toxic, but check the label for warnings. As for the trees themselves: pines, spruces and junipers can cause stomach discomfort if large amounts are swallowed. Some older ornaments may be decorated with harmful lead paints, and beware of cuts from broken glass. Lead is also a hazard in some tree light wires. Wash hands before and after handling tree lights. "Icicles" or tinsel can be a choking hazard if swallowed. Angel hair is finely spun glass, which can cause cuts or irritation when handled or swallowed.

### **Entertaining:**

If relatives come to stay through the holidays, be sure their medications are put away. Lock medicines in a suitcase, or, if in a purse, place it out of reach. And NEVER leave medications on the nightstand. What clearly appears to be medication to you can look like candy to young children. Designate a locked room where relatives and guests can place their coats and purses that may contain medications. Remove and empty partially filled glasses of alcoholic beverages which can cause serious illness to small children. Empty ash trays often. Eating as few as six cigarette butts can send a child to the hospital. Make sure small button batteries are not available to children. One swallowed battery can make a child very sick.

### **Eating:**

Cook foods thoroughly and above 160 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid salmonella by washing hands, knives and cutting boards after working with raw meats to reduce the chances of spreading the bacteria to uncooked foods. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Don't leave foods out after a meal. Cover them and refrigerate them promptly. Foods left sitting can be an attractive home for bacteria.

*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.*