



# SEASONAL HEALTH ALERT

## Holiday Hazards

*Issued: November 2019*

*Contact WAPC at [mryuk@wapc.org](mailto:mryuk@wapc.org) with questions*

The holidays are a wonderful time of year, with parties, gift giving, and time spent with friends and family. But, the holidays also create opportunities for poisonings and toxic exposures—especially in children. The Washington Poison Center offers these helpful tips to keep your days merry, bright, and healthy.

- **Make sure all gifts, even if wrapped, are safe for children.** Watch for button batteries, the small cylindrical batteries found in watches, hearing aids, and keychain flashlights. If swallowed, button batteries can cause burns, internal bleeding, swelling of the airway, and even death.
- **Monitor holiday lights when children are present.** Children are drawn towards sparkling lights, and have a tendency to put lights in their mouths. Be extra careful with bubble lights, as the liquid can cause burns, irritation, and carbon monoxide exposure.
- **Place mistletoe and holly berries up high and out of reach.** The toxins in mistletoe and holly berries may lead to nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain. Call the poison center at 1(800) 222-1222 if holly berries or mistletoe are ingested.
- **Keep open alcoholic beverages out of the reach of children.** Alcohol can have strong effects on a child's nervous system, even in small amounts. If you have a party or gathering, be vigilant and clean up leftover alcoholic beverages immediately.
- When guests come to stay, **provide a safe place** to store coats, purses, and luggage that may have medicine, vitamins, and other potentially harmful substances inside.
- If your family is traveling, **keep prescription and over the counter medicines in child-resistant containers**, not plastic zip lock bags or pill keepers. Keep these containers out of sight and out of reach of children.
- Contrary to popular folklore, **poinsettias are not poisonous.** Ingestion may irritate the mouth, stomach, or skin, but will likely not cause severe symptoms.
- **Keep pets safe** from holiday hazards, as well. If you think a pet has ingested something potentially toxic, contact the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center at (888) 426-4435.