



Holiday Safety Tips

The holidays are a wondrous time for a child. Decorations, wonderful food, visitors and gifts are exciting and by following these guidelines, you can enjoy a safer holiday season.

Your Christmas Tree

- Buying an artificial tree? Look for one labeled fire resistant. While these trees can still catch fire, they resist burning and extinguish quickly.
- Buying a live tree? Look for a fresh, green tree with needles that are hard to pull out and branches that bend, not break, under pressure.
- Set your tree up away from heat sources such as baseboards, radiators and fire places.
- Keep your real tree well watered all season.
- Be sure your tree is secure in the stand. A baby can pull on the branches and topple the tree.
- Don't use tinsel. It is easy to swallow and it can also get wound up around a baby's fingers, cutting off circulation.
- Don't use glass or leaded ornaments. If you must, place them high up on the tree. Place small ornaments high up, out of baby's reach.
- Christmas tree lights should be in good working order, with bulbs secured tightly to prevent a fire hazard.
- Don't leave Christmas lights on when you are not at home.
- Don't leave a baby or toddler alone near the tree
- Christmas is a good time to test your smoke alarm and change the batteries.

Toys and Gifts

- Toys that contain small parts are dangerous to children younger than age 3. Most toys have an age recommendation on the package. Choose toys suitable to your child's age and follow all instructions.
- Make sure toys that are purchased for older children will not be dangerous to the baby. Even if the older is responsible, a chemistry set, for example, could be hazardous to a younger child. As well, toys for older children often have smaller parts, which could easily be swallowed by a baby or toddler.
- Dispose of all gift-wrappings, like bags, paper, ribbons and bows and packaging materials as they can put a small child at risk of suffocation or choking.
- Use caution with battery-operated toys. Only adults should change batteries; use either rechargeable or disposable batteries ó never mix the two types; toys where children can

easily access batteries are not safe; and children should not take battery operated toys to bed.

Candles

- Never leave burning candles unattended.
- Use sturdy candleholders that cannot be easily tipped.
- Keep burning candles out of reach of children and away from pets, trees, decorations and wrapping paper.
- When lighting candles, be aware of loose clothing that could hang down and catch fire.
- Never reach over one candle to light another.

Holiday Parties

If you are entertaining in your own home, or visiting someone else's

- Don't assume your baby or toddler is being supervised just because she is sitting in the middle of a room full of people. Have a designated caregiver if you are busy. Always know who is watching your child.
- Alcoholic drinks, hard candies and nuts, lit candles and other dangerous items should be kept well out of reach. Be sure you alert everyone to this potential danger. Remember, purses should be kept out of reach as they often contain medications and small items that could cause choking.
- Make sure pets are kept away from your baby. Even a loving family dog can become excitable or even uncontrollable when company is around.
- Some foods can be dangerous to your baby, therefore insist that no one feed your baby anything without checking with you first.
- When visiting other people's homes, ask the host if you can move small breakable and dangerous items to higher places. Work with your host to ensure doors to bathrooms and stairways are closed.
- Keep your baby away from all plants. Some traditional Christmas plants are poisonous such as mistletoe (berries) and holly.
- Every year drinking and driving claims lives. Always make sure that you and your guests have a designated driver, take a cab or use public transportation. Remember that all passengers need to be buckled up.
- Make sure that hot drink dispensers such as coffee urns are out of the reach of children.
- Keep your sidewalk, steps and driveway clear of snow and ice to prevent falls.
- Use a barrier to protect children from all fireplaces (gas and wood) and woodstoves.

Information from Impact of the injury prevention centre of Children's Hospital