

Poison Prevention Press

November/December 2014

Volume 7, Issue 6

Holiday Poison Safety Tips for Pets

Because the holidays are hectic, pets are at an increased risk for poisonings. They are curious about the decorations and the food that is sitting out on tables. Pay close attention to the following items to help keep your pets poison-safe during the holidays:

•Human Food and Drinks:

Many of our holiday treats can be very dangerous to pets

•**Plants:** Many of the same safety tips apply to animals that apply to people

•**Tinsel and Liquid Potpourri:** these are very dangerous for cats

•**Guest's Handbags:** Curious pets will explore handbags that are left in their reach. There may be any number of poison hazards there.

More information about pet poison safety around the holidays and year-round can be found at

www.petpoisonhelpline.com

Did you know that...

- In 2013, there were 2,227 button battery ingestions involving children <6 years reported to poison centers in the U.S. resulting in 3 deaths.
- In 2013, foreign bodies (toys, batteries, etc.) were the 4th most common ingestion in children < 6 years reported to the MPC.



Follow the MPC
on Facebook!

Holiday Hazards

The holiday season is in full swing so we are busy shopping and decorating. Keep the following information in mind when buying gifts and decorating to prevent a holiday poisoning from happening.

Ornaments: There are many types of ornaments used to decorate the tree. Some are made from glass and could cause cuts in the mouth and stomach if eaten. Family heirloom ornaments and ornaments from other countries may contain lead. Keep these away from areas where small children can reach them. Icicles and angel hair contain glass particles and may cause cuts in the mouth. Bubble lights are very pretty, but the liquid inside is very dangerous. Avoid using them if there are small children in the house.

Alcohol: As we enjoy holiday parties with family and friends, we should keep in mind that alcohol can be dangerous for children. They may find left over cocktails and unattended bowls of punch and eggnog. Some children may drink what they think is juice or soda, not realizing that it was an adult drink with alcohol. In addition to making a child drowsy, silly and wobbly on their feet, alcohol can lower a child's blood sugar. Clean up all drink glasses and punch bowls before going to bed to prevent small children who are early risers from tasting the leftovers.

Plants: There are many plants used as decorations during the holidays. Holly berries will cause symptoms if large amounts are eaten. Although some types of mistletoe berries are poisonous, the berries from most mistletoe in the United States are non-toxic. If eaten, all parts of the amaryllis can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. The bulb is the most toxic part of the plant. All parts of the Christmas cactus are non-toxic. One of the most common calls to the poison center is about the poinsettia. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are safe to have around during the holidays. Eating too many leaves will only cause stomach upset. The sap may cause a skin rash. Pets are more sensitive and may develop symptoms with smaller quantities. But the bottom line is that poinsettias are not the deadly toxin many think they are.

Toys: Toys with small magnets can be a choking hazard. But if more than one magnet is swallowed, they can attract to each other inside the body. In some cases, surgery is needed to remove the magnets and repair internal damage. Trains are becoming more popular. The liquid that can be added to the train to make smoke can be harmful if swallowed. Make sure to keep the small bottle of liquid out of sight and reach of small children.

Button Batteries: These tiny batteries are found in toys and many other common household items. Because they are so small, a young child can easily swallow one without their parent realizing it until much later. Most batteries will pass through the body without harm. However, batteries that get stuck in the esophagus (the tube between the throat and the stomach) may result in severe injury. Burns can begin to occur in as little as 2 hours. As soon as you think a battery is missing, call the poison center.

Lamp oil and reed diffusers: Fragrant oils make our homes smell like the holidays. Because many of these oils smell like food, children may be tempted to taste them. If a child gasps while swallowing a lamp oil or reed diffuser liquid, the oil may get into their lungs. If you have small children around, make sure these products are well out of their reach.

Being aware of possible poison hazards during the holiday is important. Just as important is knowing what to do if a child or pet is exposed to one of the above items. Remember that pharmacists and nurses are available 24/7 to help with poisonings around the holidays by calling 1-800-222-1222. Post the number with other emergency numbers and program it in your mobile phone. This number will reach a local poison center when it is dialed from anywhere in the United States.

