



FLORIDA/USVI POISON INFORMATION CENTER - JACKSONVILLE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FLORIDA'S POISON CONTROL CENTERS ADVISE ON AVOIDING HOLIDAY HAZARDS

JACKSONVILLE, FL — As millions of people across Florida prepare for the upcoming holiday season, the Florida/USVI Poison Information Center – Jacksonville reminds residents to take steps to avoid holiday hazards.

“During the months of December and January, poison centers see an increase in calls related to the events surrounding the holiday season,” said Dr. Jay L. Schauben, Director of the Florida/USVI Poison Information Center – Jacksonville.

“Many of us travel or have houseguests to attend holiday celebrations and family get-togethers. It is very important to remain vigilant during this time, as these festivities can bring hazards traditionally associated with the holiday season.”

The Florida/USVI Poison Information Center – Jacksonville offers the following tips to help ensure a poison-free holidays.

Toy Safety & Button Battery Warnings

During the winter holidays, toy and battery safety are a serious concern. Nationwide, poison centers received calls for 94,000 cases of foreign body and/or button battery ingestion in 2014, 6,500 of which involved toys and ornaments.

- Button batteries, found in watches, toys, games, singing greeting cards, and remote control devices, can be dangerous when swallowed by children. They can become lodged in the esophagus, causing severe tissue damage. Keep all items containing button batteries securely fastened or out of reach of children.
- If anyone ingests a foreign body, especially a button battery, call Poison Help at 1-800-222-1222 immediately.
- Antique toys and toys made in some foreign countries pose a higher risk for lead exposure. Inspect these toys for chipping or worn paint.

Holiday Decoration Dangers

- If small children are around, be aware of choking hazards like small ornaments, tinsel, and icicles.
- Antique ornaments may be decorated with harmful lead paints.
- Bubble lights may contain methylene chloride, which is very toxic if swallowed.
- The use of artificial snow can cause respiratory problems if not used in a well-ventilated area.
- Lamp oils can be toxic if contents are swallowed and coughed/vomited into the lungs.
- Artificial tree scents often contain alcohol and other irritants, and can be dangerous if swallowed or sprayed into the eyes. Tree preservatives, which may have dangerous levels of electrolytes and chemicals, should be kept away from children.
- Snow globe liquids can be filled with toxic chemicals or water contain bacteria that can cause significant illness.
- Although a common poison myth, poinsettias are not toxic but are actually irritating; ingestion can cause some stomach upset and possibly vomiting.

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Alcoholic Beverages & Children

Every year, poison centers manage thousands of cases of alcohol exposure in children under six. With the increased number of celebrations during the holidays, it's important to make alcohol safety a priority.

- Even a small amount of alcohol can cause severely low blood sugar and distress to a child.
- Make sure to clean up immediately following all holiday parties so that alcohol, cigarette butts, and other potentially harmful items are not within reach of children.
- Store all alcoholic beverages in a locked cabinet or up and out of reach and sight of children.
- Alcohol found in mouthwash, hand sanitizers, and other personal care products can also cause alcohol poisoning, so it is important to keep these products up and away from children as well.
- If you suspect a child has ingested any amount of alcohol, call Poison Help at 1-800-222-1222.

Carbon Monoxide Concerns

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless and colorless gas, which is released from all equipment burning gas or oil and can build up to fatal levels if not vented properly. This can include placing generators too close to open windows or indoors, gas furnaces or dryers with a blocked flue, kerosene space heaters, and gasoline-powered vehicles and equipment running indoors in a garage. The most common symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. If enough carbon monoxide is inhaled, it can cause unconsciousness, impaired coordination, and even death.

- Have your home's heating system and chimneys inspected regularly to ensure proper ventilation.
- Install a CO detector in your home and replace the battery regularly.

Pets and Poisons

- Be sure to keep any wrapped food or treats up and away from pets, not under the tree. Chocolate, dried fruits, and nuts can be dangerous.
- Ensure your tree water is covered and inaccessible, as it can contain fertilizer, chemicals, and bacteria. Tree preservative liquid may have dangerous levels of electrolytes and chemicals as well.

For more information, the media may contact Brie Burge, Media Relations/Education Associate, at 904.244.7978 or burge@poison.ufl.edu.

The mission of the Florida/USVI Poison Information Center - Jacksonville is to provide exceptional care for individual patients and for supporting public health through information, surveillance, education, and research. Experts staff the Poison Help Hotline at 800.222.1222 that provides free, confidential, expert medical advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year from toxicology specialists, including nurses, pharmacists, physicians, and poison information providers.

The Florida/USVI Poison Information Center - Jacksonville is a cooperative effort between the University of Florida College of Medicine, UF Health Jacksonville, the University of Florida Health Science Center - Jacksonville, and the State of Florida, Department of Health, Children's Medical Services. The Florida/USVI Poison Information Center - Jacksonville is designated as an accredited regional poison control center by the American Association of Poison Control Centers. To learn more, visit floridapoisoncontrol.org, like us on [Facebook](#), and follow us on Twitter ([@FloridaPoison](#)).

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