



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

December 2007

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

The holidays are an exciting time of year. To help ensure a safe holiday season, here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Trees

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant."
- When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness. A fresh tree is green, needles are hard to pull from branches and when bent between your fingers, needles do not break. The cut tree trunk of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.
- Place trees away from fireplaces, radiators or portable heaters. Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- Cut a few inches off the trunk of your tree to expose fresh wood, allowing for better water absorption and to keep your tree from drying out and becoming a fire hazard.
- Be sure to keep the stand filled with water, because heated rooms can dry trees out rapidly.

Lights

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights.
- Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use. To hold lights in place, string them through hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks.
- Check all tree lights—even if you've just purchased them—for frayed wires, broken sockets, or loose connections.
- Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. The lights could short out and start a fire.

Decorations

- Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree.
- Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- With small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable; keep trimmings with removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid them from swallowing.

Toy Safety

- Millions of toys have been recalled due to safety issues. To check whether a toy is unsafe or to report a toy-related injury, call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 800/638-2772.
- Select toys to suit the age. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.
- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy, read the instructions carefully.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (under age 10) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.
- Children under age 3 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games.

Food Safety

- Bacteria are often present in raw foods. Fully cook meats and poultry and thoroughly wash raw vegetables and fruits.
- Keep hot liquids and foods away from the edges of counters and tables and a child's exploring hands.
- Wash your hands frequently, and make sure your children do the same.
- Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Thaw meat in the refrigerator.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.

Fireplaces

- Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result as wrappings ignite suddenly and burn intensely.

Shopping

- Shop during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must shop at night, go with a friend or family member.
- Avoid wearing expensive jewelry.
- Even though you are rushed and thinking about a thousand things, stay alert to your surroundings.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Be extra careful if you carry a wallet or purse.