

Toxic Update

BC Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC)

Fact Sheet – Holiday Hazards

24 Hr Poison Line

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This Newsletter is a publication of the BC Drug and Poison Information Centre. Any questions or comments related to its content should be directed to the editors.

If you'd like to receive this by email, please contact...

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Winter 2006



BC Centre for Disease Control
AN AGENCY OF THE PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES AUTHORITY

Each season has special hazards and winter holidays are no exception. With the entertaining, gifts and decorations during the holidays, homes can be filled with bright and interesting things. Some can be toxic. Here are a few holiday hazards. If you suspect these substances have poisoned someone, call the BC Poison Control Centre using the 24 hour Poison Line.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Alcohol drinks can cause severe toxicity to a child. Symptoms include drowsiness, confusion and coma, vomiting and low blood sugar, especially in infants and young children.

CANDLES

Wax and synthetic candles have a low order of toxicity. Ingestion may result in diarrhea.

DISC BATTERIES

Button batteries often come with watches, cameras and toys. If swallowed these may lodge in the esophagus or airway and can be an emergency. An initial x-ray is needed to ensure the battery has passed into the stomach. If it passes into the stomach, the stool will need to be checked until the battery passes.

GLOW STICKS

Glow sticks have a low order of toxicity. Biting into these can result in mild oral irritation. A splash in the eye can cause immediate stinging and burning sensation. This generally does not result in burns to the eye.

ICICLES and TINSEL

These are made of plastic with a nontoxic aluminum colouring. Ingestion of a large amount could be a choking hazard.

LAMP OIL

Lamp oil is attractive to children because of its colour and fragrance. Ingestion of a small amount can be serious and lead to coughing, difficulty breathing and chemical pneumonia.

MEAT THERMOMETER

These contain a small amount of ethanol and a red dye. Ingestion of the liquid will not cause toxicity. If the thermometer breaks in the meat, remove that section of meat and any glass particles prior to serving.

PLANTS

- **Christmas cactus:** This plant is nontoxic. Ingestion may cause minor abdominal pain, vomiting or diarrhea in young children.
- **Holly:** Ingestion of large amounts of leaves or berries can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Ingestion of a few berries may cause only mild symptoms.
- **Poinsettia:** The irritant sap may cause mouth, skin or eye irritation. Serious toxicity is unlikely from ingestion of 1 or 2 leaves but oral irritation, nausea and vomiting may occur.

ROAD SALT

Commonly contains sodium chloride. Ingestion of less than one teaspoonful can cause vomiting but is unlikely to result in serious toxicity. Larger amounts can lead to severe vomiting, seizures and death.

SNOW SCENE GLOBES

Ingestion of the "snow" particles is nontoxic. The liquid is usually water and may have bacterial contamination if globe becomes cracked.

SNOW SPRAY

"Snow" particles are an inert plastic. Ingestion is considered nontoxic but deliberate inhalation of the propellant may cause drowsiness, dizziness and confusion.

TURKEY PREPARATION

For questions regarding thawing, cooking, preparation and storage, see www.butterball.com.

Additional poison prevention tips on BC Poison Control Centre website www.dpic.org