



AAPCC NEWS RELEASE

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The American Association of Poison Control Centers Releases Guidelines to Avoid Potential Poison Hazards this Holiday Season

Alexandria, VA – With the holiday season in full swing, the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) urges the public to remain vigilant in helping to prevent poison exposures that occur more frequently around this time of year.

“The holidays are an exciting time of the year, but present a host of opportunities for poisonings to occur,” said Stephen T. Kaminski, JD, AAPCC CEO and Executive Director. “The good news is that it is relatively easy to have a poison free holiday with preventative measures.”

The experts at the nation’s 55 poison centers are especially concerned about increased carbon monoxide exposures during the colder months. In 2016, poison centers were consulted on over 13,500 carbon monoxide exposures. Each year hundreds of Americans die from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 are hospitalized, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Known as the “silent killer,” carbon monoxide is an odorless and colorless gas, which is released through defective generators, gas furnaces and heaters, gasoline-powered vehicles and equipment, and other fuel-burning appliances. 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. “It’s vital to have your heating systems and fuel burning appliances inspected regularly by professionals to ensure proper ventilation,” said Kaminski. “Additionally, installing and regularly replacing battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home can help to determine if there is a leak.”

During the excitement of holiday celebrations, alcohol safety is also an important consideration. Alcohol affects children differently than it does adults, and swallowing even a little can be toxic to a child, causing severely low blood sugar and distress to a child’s central nervous system. “Children are naturally curious and mimic adult behaviors, so adults should take special care to keep wine, beer, liquor and other alcoholic beverages up and away from children,” said Kaminski. 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.

Also, antique toys and toys that have been made in some foreign countries pose a higher risk for lead exposure. Therefore, parents and caregivers are encouraged to carefully inspect these types of toys for chipping or worn paint before allowing children to play with them, and to review toy recall notices before purchasing new toys.

Lastly, toy and battery safety remains a serious concern for poison center experts during the winter holidays. In 2016, poison centers were consulted on approximately 96,000 cases of foreign body and/or button battery ingestion, roughly 6,800 of which involved toys and ornaments. Button batteries, which can be found in watches, toys, games, flashing jewelry, singing greeting cards, and remote control devices, can be especially dangerous when swallowed by children. These batteries can become stuck in the esophagus, causing severe tissue damage and even death. Button batteries may also cause injury when they are placed in the nose or ears. "It is imperative that parents keep items containing button batteries securely fastened or out of the reach of children," said Kaminski. "The best way to be prepared for poisoning emergencies this holiday season is to program the Poison Help line, 1-800-222-1222, into your mobile telephone, and post it in a visible place in your home. You can also text "poison" to 797979 to save the Poison Control contact information in your smartphone. The experts at poison centers provide free and confidential information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, seven days a week, year-round, including holidays."

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About American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC)

AAPCC supports the nation's 55 poison control center members in their efforts to treat and prevent exposures to drugs, consumer products, animal venom, environmental hazards and food poisoning. Members staff the Poison Help hotline (1-800-222-1222), a service 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. In addition, AAPCC maintains the only poison information and surveillance database in the United States, providing real-time monitoring of unusual poisoning patterns, chemical exposures and other emerging public health hazards. AAPCC partners with federal agencies such as HRSA, CDC, FDA and EPA, as well as private industry. **Be prepared for a poisoning emergency and download poison control's contact information today. Text "poison" to 797979.**