Poison Proof for the Holidays

As you prepare for the holidays, you may bring unexpected dangers into your household. Keep your family safe by getting poison smart about holiday products. Learn to identify the seasonal products that can be hazardous to your children and pets. Remember this is a busy time for everyone. Do not let the extra holiday details distract you. Be watchful about safe storage and proper product handling. Make sure children and pets are properly supervised.

Toys and Gifts:

- Many toys and gifts can be poisoning or choking risks. Check current recalls by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at **http://www.cpsc.gov**.

- Beware of products that use button batteries. These products may pose great risk for small children.

Hazardous Decorations:

- **Angel hair**: is finely spun glass, an irritant to the skin, eyes and throat if swallowed. Wear gloves.

- **Bubble lights**: contain a small amount of methylene chloride, also in paint removers. One "opened" light may cause mild skin or mouth irritation.

- **Candles**: consist of wax, synthetic materials, non-poisonous colors and scents that are non-toxic, but if swallowed a choking hazard to small children.

- **Christmas tree preservatives**: commercial products usually contain concentrated sugar solutions are non-toxic, but solutions made with aspirin or bleach can be harmful if taken in large doses.

- **Fireplace color crystals:** can be mistaken by children as candy and consist of metal salts such as copper, selenium, arsenic and antimony. If swallowed can cause irritation or burning to the mouth and throat. Large amounts can result in heavy metal poisoning.

- **Gift wrap**: most are non-toxic, but foil or colored wrap may contain lead.

- **Icicles or tinsel**: can cause choking in pets or small children and can contain lead or tin and can be toxic if swallowed continuously.

- **Snow globes**: contain acetone or methylene chloride.

- **Snow sprays**: contain acetone or methylene chloride and can be harmful when inhaled. Longer or concentrated exposures can become serious.

- **Tree ornaments**: if pieces swallowed can cause choking or blockage in the intestines.

- Antique or foreign-made items with lead-based paint can be toxic.

Holiday Plants:

- **Amaryllis**: Tropical American/African plant whose bulb if digested can cause stomach irritation.
- **Christmas Cactus**: considered non-toxic but its needles can irritate the skin.
- **Christmas Trees**: Bark digested can cause nausea, the needles can cause choking, and the sap may irritate the skin.
- **Holly berries**: Small red berries if swallowed in amounts of more than 2-3 can cause nausea, vomiting, stomach pain or diarrhea in small children.
- **Mistletoe (*Phoradendron sp.)***: entire plant contains toxic substances if eaten can cause vomiting, redness of the skin, drowsiness or restlessness and hallucinations. In rare cases seizures.
- **Poinsettia**: eating a large amount can result in a mild stomach upset. The sap can cause a skin rash and should be washed with soap and water.
- **Pyracantha**: if large amounts of the berries are eaten, a stomach ache may result.

Other Holiday Dangers:

- **Alcohol**: is common with children year-round but increases during the holidays. Children often imitate adults and are prone to drink partially filled glasses. In addition to liquors, beers and wines, alcohol may also be found in perfumes, aftershave lotions, mouthwashes and hand sanitizers. Keep all of these products out of the reach of children.
- **Batteries and button batteries**: consist of acid or alkaline and are caustic. If swallowed can stick in the throat or stomach and can cause serious burns if chemical leakage occurs. Also can be a choking hazard.
- **Cigarettes and cigars**: contain enough nicotine to be fatal to children. Ingestion can result in vomiting, sweating and seizures. Keep all ashtrays out of the reach of children.
- **Medicines**: Visiting family and friends sometimes leave medications in the open with non-child resistant closures making them easily accessible to children. Visitors' purses or bags can contain unattended medications and also the homes of relatives or friends might not be poison-proof.

The Texas Poison Center Network serves the State of Texas to prevent poisoning. TPCN offers free and confidential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you believe you have been exposed to a poison or have questions about a substance that may be poisonous, call **1-800-222-1222** immediately.