



WASHINGTON POISON CENTER

BE PREPARED FOR HOLIDAY HAZARDS: CALL 1-800-222-1222

Seattle – You turned your back for just a second and that’s when your toddler ate a handful of artificial snow. Your grandmother is staying at your house for the holidays and she accidentally may have taken her medication twice. Your dog just ate the mistletoe and you’re not sure if it’s poisonous.

Put this on your “to do” list this holiday season: attach the National Poison Centers’ toll-free hotline to your phone and keep it with you at all times.

When you dial, **1-800-222-1222**, you will receive immediate assistance from the Washington Poison Center’s specially trained team of pharmacists, nurses and poison experts, backed by physician toxicologists.

At the Washington Poison Center, we get numerous calls this time of the year from people worried about popular holiday decorations, including plants, tinsel, and artificial snow, but there is no scientific data that eating a poinsettia, holly berries or mistletoe will put your life at any risk at all.

“The true threat this time of year is alcohol and food poisoning,” said William O. Robertson, M.D., Medical Director of the Washington Poison Center. “Remember to keep cocktails out of the reach of children, and any adults planning to drive; and cook and store food properly to reduce the risk of food poisoning.”

Dr. Robertson also reminds everyone to keep an eye open for potential hazards brought by guests or found in other people’s homes. “Grandma’s medicine or vitamins found in a purse or suitcase can be very tempting to a young child. We’re all busy at this time of the year and off our normal routines, so it’s easy for mistakes to occur. Keep our toll-free phone number with you at all times. You can get immediate help anytime from anywhere when you use it.”

Consumers may call the Washington Poison Center to obtain a free copy of “Facts about Popular Holiday Decorations,” which lists the potential effects of ingesting holiday plants and decorations.



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FACTS ABOUT POPULAR HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

- * **Poinsettias** may irritate the mouth or stomach, and the sap may irritate the skin of some people, but otherwise it really is non-toxic.
- * **Holly berries**, if eaten, may cause a stomachache – but that's all.
- * **Mistletoe berries**, if eaten, may also cause a stomachache – but no more.
- * **Evergreen needles** are non-toxic, but their sharpness may cause discomfort. Beware of homemade Christmas tree preservatives – if consumed they may be toxic.
- * **Christmas tree ornaments** are not poison hazards, but a young child could choke on small parts.
- * **Tinsel, icicles, glitter and garlands** are made of plastic, aluminum or tin. **If swallowed**, they are not a problem, but can be a problem in ears, up the nose, etc.
- * **Artificial snow** contains wax and long-chain fatty acids that are non-toxic. However, repeatedly inhaling the aerosol could cause breathing problems.
- * **Wax candles** are non-toxic – but not very tasty!
- * **Angel hair** is not poisonous, but it is made of spun glass (similar to fiberglass) and may irritate the eyes, skin or mouth.
- * Commercial **wrapping paper and ribbon** are made with non-toxic dyes.
- * **Perfumes and colognes** (popular gifts left under the tree) often contain alcohol, but, in virtually all instances, the amount consumed is too small to be a problem.

*If you have additional questions about a potential poison, please do not hesitate to call the
Washington Poison Center*

1-800-222-1222