

## CHRISTMAS SEASON SAFETY

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November 25, 2014 – I can find no greater meaning of Christmas than to allow my senses the gift of being witness to the anticipation and excitement through the eyes of a child.

Christmas holidays are just around the corner and children with their wide-eyed grins will be bubbling with exhilaration as they anxiously await the wondrous events of this magical Christmas season. By observing simple safety tips you and your family can enjoy a happy and safe holiday season.

Ho! Ho! Ho!

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### CHRISTMAS TREES

Nothing beats the smell of a fresh Christmas tree but few things during this festive season are as dangerous as a dried-out tree sitting in your living room. Before you buy a Christmas tree, examine the needles. Bend them between your fingers. They shouldn't break. Tap the trunk of the tree gently against the ground. If an excessive amount of needles fall to the ground, it's too dry. Scotch pines tend to shed more needles than other types of Christmas trees.



- Store the tree outside until you are ready to decorate it.
- Making a fresh 1 inch cut on the trunk of the tree before placing it in the tree stand will allow it to absorb water.
- After the tree has been placed in a sturdy base, fill the reservoir with water and check the water level daily – morning and evening. A fresh tree will drink a lot of water!

- Secure the tree so that it cannot be knocked over by pets or children. Many of the newer 'wide base' stands offer much more stability than the older stands.
- The Christmas tree should not block the hall area and door escape routes.
- Artificial trees should bear the label Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Artificial trees should be made of flame-resistant materials and lights should never be used on 'old' artificial trees with metal frames.
- Keep your Christmas tree away from floor heaters, fireplaces and other heat sources, as well as electrical outlets and electrical sources.

- Do not place lit candles near the tree and **NEVER** on the tree.

- Christmas lights/bulbs should not come in contact with needles or branches.

- Make sure your lights are CSA approved.

- Don't use outdoor lights on an indoor Christmas tree.

- When decorating the tree, place breakable ornaments on the higher limbs. It will protect your children and pets as well as safeguard the breakables.



- Keep small ornaments and tinsel that can be swallowed out of reach of children and pets.

- Check all indoor and outdoor lights to make sure that all connections are tight and that the bulbs and cords are in good condition.

- Replace wiring, sockets, or plugs that are frayed, cracked or have loose connections.

- Replace burnt out bulbs with those recommended by the manufacturer.

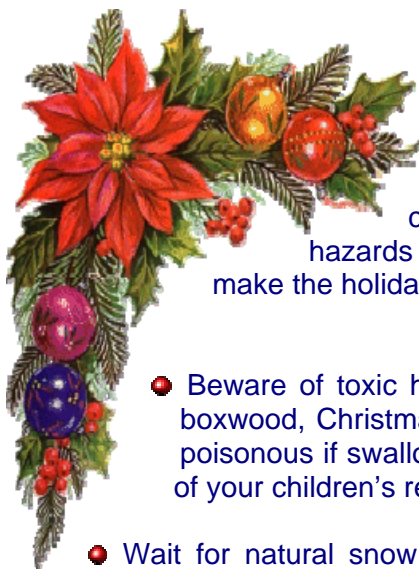
- Lights should not touch combustible materials. When shopping for Christmas tree ornaments make sure they are flame resistant – CSA approved.

- Do not overload electrical outlets. Use more than one outlet or power bar if the wattage of your lights is more than the outlet can handle.

- Keep bubbling lights away from your children's reach. They contain a hazardous chemical that can cause irritation or chemical burn if the bulb breaks and the chemical is released.



- Never leave lights on for extended periods of time, and **NEVER** leave the lights on when you are going out for the evening or when retiring to bed.
- Safely dispose of your tree before it becomes dangerously dry. In many areas, waste management recycling programs pick-up Christmas tree after the New Year.
- Do not burn wrappings or evergreen boughs. These can burn extremely fast, throwing off sparks and burning debris.
- Before starting a fire, remove all decorations near the vicinity and ensure that the fireplace flue is open. Proper ventilation reduces the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.



## **DECORATING THE HOUSE**

The Christmas season is one of the happiest times of the year, but it also carries the potential of accidental injuries caused by improper Christmas decorating. By avoiding those hazards and paying close attention to safety tips for holidays, you will make the holidays happy and safe for you and your family.

- Beware of toxic holiday decorations. Mistletoe, holly berries, amaryllis, azalea, boxwood, Christmas rose, crown of thorns, English ivy and Jerusalem cherry are poisonous if swallowed. Old tinsel may contain lead so please make sure it is out of your children's reach.
- Wait for natural snow to hit your windows – artificial snow sprays can cause lung irritation if inhaled.
- Place decorations that are breakable or that contain small parts out of reach of your children – beautiful to look at but please don't touch.
- Lit candles are a fire and burn hazard. Cut candlewicks short to prevent a high flame. Lit candles should be placed in a safe location out of reach of small children and should never be left unattended.
- Christmas novelties are not toys, even if they resemble them, and they do not have to comply with toy safety regulations. Give careful thought to where you display your novelty decorations.
- Ensure that the garlands, wreaths and other decorations are out of reach of young children.
- If you are decorating with balloons, be aware that balloons pose a serious choking hazard to little children.

## CHOOSING SAFE GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

Health Canada has submitted, yet again, another warning that toys containing small, powerful magnets are a health risk to children.

Recently a three-year-old boy swallowed two magnet rods (2.7 cm long) from a Mega Brands 'Magnetix Magnetic Building Set'. The child received immediate medical care and did not sustain injuries but it could have gone the other way – within a moment's notice.

The magnets are made of rare-earth mineral neodymium and are at least 15 times more powerful than standard magnets. They stick together with such force that if more than one is swallowed, they can bore holes in the stomach or intestines and cause severe, life-threatening complications within hours. If the high-powered magnets are not detected and removed, they can cause tissue necrosis where two loops of bowel are squeezed together which occludes the blood supply to that area of the gut causing infection, dissemination – and yes, even death. Survivors can experience serious lifelong health problems.



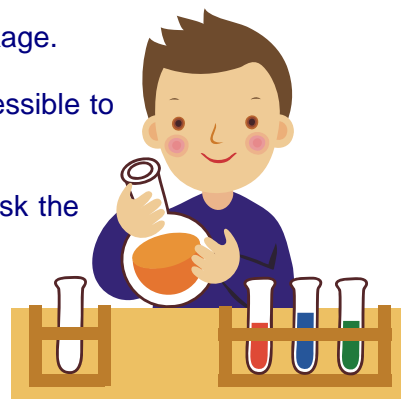
- Select Christmas gifts that are suitable for the child's age and abilities, and from reputable sources that comply with toy industry standards.

- Look for the manufacturer's 'age recommendation' on the package.

- Make sure batteries in toys are properly installed and not accessible to the child. Do not let children take battery-operated toys to bed.

- If you are buying a gift for someone's child don't hesitate to ask the parents for suggestions.

- Remember that very young children put things in their mouths. Check toys carefully for small parts that can be pulled or broken off, i.e. the eyes on stuffed toy animals, the wheels on toy cars and button batteries.



- Toys with string or cord attachments longer than seven inches pose a strangle hazard.

- Check all toys for sharp points or edges.

- Stay away from loud toys. You will save your sanity *and* protect your child's hearing.

- Follow the manufacturer's directions closely for correct toy assembly and usage. Teach your child how to use the toy properly and safely.

- Ensure that older children have adequate adult supervision with toys that may pose a safety hazard if used incorrectly, i.e. chemistry sets or wood burning kits.

- The usage of batteries in toys should be monitored for the following potential dangers:

- a) incorrectly installed batteries with wrong ends in contacts may overheat and explode;
- b) old batteries may leak and the chemicals can cause burns;  
and
- c) small 'button' batteries can be swallowed and cause choking and poisoning.



- Keep broken toys out of your children's reach until they can be repaired.
- Discard toys that cannot be repaired.
- If you have decided to give children sports equipment for Christmas, include protective gear like helmets or reflective clothing as part of the gift.
- Plug-in electric toys should be labelled by a fire safety-testing agency. Don't buy highly combustible toys that use flammable liquids.

## ***GIFT WRAPPING***

- Keep combustible materials away from all heat sources.
- Discard wrapping materials promptly after unwrapping.
- Plastic bags can lead to suffocation.
- Small packing Styrofoam pellets and ties can be a choking hazard for little children.



## ***ENTERTAINING DURING THE HOLIDAYS***

Holiday gatherings bring friends and family together, however, hosts and guests who are not accustomed to having little children around may need to be reminded to keep dangerous items out of reach:



- Nuts, candy canes, mints, popcorn, and small snack foods can cause choking.
- Hot drinks are a frequent cause of scalding burns.
- Purses are enticing to young children, but may contain such dangerous items as medications, lighters and sharp objects.
- Leftover food and drinks should be cleaned up promptly after entertaining so they are not accessible to early-risers!



- Do not permit smoking in your home. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so they are out of your children's reach. Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers outside of your premises.

Give your family  
the most wonderful gift of all ...  
a happy, healthy and safe holiday season!

May the warmth and love of this Christmas season fill your hearts and home.

Best wishes from all of us at  
the Children's Health and Safety Association

*Merry*  
*Christmas*

The text "Merry Christmas" is written in a red, cursive font. The word "Merry" is on the top line and "Christmas" is on the bottom line. There are two holly leaves with red berries: one is positioned between the two words, and another is positioned below the "M" of "Merry".