



# Prevention Press

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## Toys as a Poison Hazard

The Maryland Poison Center would like to remind parents that toys can be a poison hazard.

- Button (disc) batteries from toys can be swallowed easily by small children. In addition to being a choking hazard, the battery can become lodged in the esophagus causing internal injuries.
- Toys with small magnets can also be a choking hazard and can be problematic if more than one is swallowed.
- Snow globes are popular during the holidays. Some manufacturers put antifreeze in the snow globe liquid to prevent the liquid from freezing during shipping. Do not allow children to drink the liquid from snow globes. Pets can be poisoned as well, so keep them away if a snow globe breaks.

## Did you know that...

In 2006, foreign bodies (coins, toys, etc) were the 4<sup>th</sup> most common ingestion in children under the age of 6 years reported to poison centers nationwide.

In 2007, the Maryland Poison Center received over 2,000 calls concerning foreign body ingestion.

## Winter and Holiday Poison Hazards

As winter approaches, the Maryland Poison Center would like everyone to be mindful of the additional seasonal hazards facing both children and adults.

Make certain oil and gas furnaces are in proper working order to prevent exposure to carbon monoxide. Wood stoves, fireplaces, portable generators and portable heaters (kerosene or propane) are other seasonal sources of carbon monoxide. Remember, carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas that is the product of incomplete burning. Carbon monoxide detectors provide an added level of safety.

As automobiles are prepared for winter, remember that anti-freeze and windshield washer fluid are particularly dangerous. As little as one mouthful of either product in a toddler or an adult would require emergency room treatment. Pets are equally sensitive to the effects of these products. Make sure that any puddles or spills are rinsed away thoroughly to prevent the family pet from being poisoned.

Ice melt products are used to make walkways safe. Some of the undissolved crystals remain on the sidewalk or make their way into the house on the boots of visitors. Inquisitive toddlers may pick up a crystal or two and put it in their mouth. This should pose no danger for the child. However, if eaten in quantity, the child may become ill.

Holiday ornaments add to the festivity of the environment. Some are made from glass and could cause cuts in the mouth and stomach if ingested. Family heirloom ornaments and ornaments from other countries may pose a lead danger. Keep these away from areas where inquisitive small hands can reach. Icicles and angel hair contain glass particles and may cause cuts in the mouth. Bubble lights are very pretty, but the liquid inside is extremely dangerous. Avoid using them if there are small children around.

As we enjoy holiday parties with family and friends, we should be mindful that unintentional ingestions of alcohol by children are possible. Children may have access to left over cocktails and unattended bowls of punch and eggnog. Some children may drink what they think is juice or soda, not realizing that it was an adult drink with alcohol added. Clean up all beverage glasses and punch bowls before going to bed to prevent small children who are early risers from tasting the leftovers.

Finally, holiday plants are popular decorations. Holly berries will cause symptoms if eaten in quantity. The berries from most mistletoe in the United States are non-toxic. And one of the most frequent calls to the poison center concerns a popular holiday plant...the poinsettia. Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are safe to have around during the holidays. Eating too many leaves will cause stomach upset and the sap may cause a skin rash. Pets may be more sensitive and may develop symptoms with smaller quantities.



Bubble lights



Poinsettias are safe to have in the home.