

CHILDPROOF YOUR HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

➔ For children across the country, the holidays are the most magical time of the year. While parents are busy preparing, it's important to take a few extra steps to ensure a safe season, because holiday ornaments, lights and some presents can be dangerous to the littlest ones in your life. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, in 2012 an estimated 192,000 children were treated in emergency rooms for toy-related injuries, and an estimated 136,314 children suffered burns. In the same year, 3,270 children were seen in emergency rooms for injuries caused by nonelectric decorations, such as broken glass ornaments. "We wish everyone a happy and safe holiday, and bringing awareness of potential hazards during this time is integral to that goal," said Jeanne Marsala, RN, Safe Kids Clark County Director at Sunrise Children's Hospital. Whether you're choosing the perfect present, baking sheets of gingerbread, decorating the tree or doing whatever makes the season special for you and your family, be sure to watch out for these risks.

DECORATION SAFETY

While decorating, be aware that children are curious and might try to play with or pull down decorations within reach. "Pulling down anything is a big problem. Trees, ornaments and lights can all be pulled down and cause injury. Stockings with heavy hooks and hangers can be problematic, too, because they can hit a child on the head if he or she pulls at them," Marsala said.

- 1** Don't leave anything that's visible to the child on top of TVs, refrigerators, shelves or other high places. "Children can easily climb up to higher areas if they see something they want. If you're trying to keep something out of a child's reach, like candy or presents, be sure that they can't see it," Marsala said.
- 2** Avoid using glass ornaments around young children, but if you do, be sure that you place breakable ornaments and/or ones with metal hooks near the top of the tree.
- 3** Never leave any candles burning unattended, and be sure there are no candles lit while unwrapping presents, to avoid wrapping paper catching fire. Put away lighters and matches to prevent children from playing with them.
- 4** Be aware of harmful holiday plants that can be poisonous to children and pets. Mistletoe and holly berries, poinsettia and Jerusalem cherries can be poisonous if ingested.
- 5** Check any holiday string lights to be sure they're in good condition and there are no missing or exposed bulbs, frayed wires or loose connections.

Keep as many decorations as possible out of a child's reach, including stockings, lights and anything using metal hooks. Never leave decorations around a window unless it's fully shut and locked.

Keep the tree well hydrated by watering it regularly, and put it outside once it's dry. Brittle needles can cause fires if not taken care of properly. Some families also may want to consider investing in an artificial tree, which doesn't pose a fire risk and tends to be lighter, in case it's pulled down or falls.



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PRESENT SAFETY

The first rule in choosing presents for children is to heed the age warning on the toy. "Always buy age-appropriate toys for children to prevent choking or other possible hazards," Marsala said. Other important factors to remember when giving toys include:

- 1** Choose toys that are made in the U.S. and/or sold at normal retail stores. If you're shopping for toys at a second-hand store, swap meet or flea market, do not buy them unless they're made in the U.S., because otherwise they may not meet proper safety standards.
- 2** If you have older kids and younger kids in the house, be sure the younger children aren't playing with toys that are too advanced for them. "One of the most unsafe toys for toddlers is Barbie, because she has so many accessories that can be swallowed," Marsala said.
- 3** Always get the appropriate safety gear to accompany presents like bikes, skateboards, scooters or roller skates. This includes a helmet, wrist guards, knee pads and elbow pads.

BATTERY SAFETY
"Button batteries are extremely dangerous and can be deadly if swallowed," Marsala said. If a child has swallowed a button battery, take him or her to the emergency room immediately. Do not assume the child will be able to pass it. Found in some electronics, toys and lighted holiday decorations, button batteries are not only a choking hazard but can erode the esophagus, causing death or serious injury.



KANGAROOS CAN JUMP UP TO 3 TIMES THEIR OWN HEIGHT, BUT THEY CAN'T WALK BACKWARDS.

ANOTHER FACT: From minor cuts and bruises to serious injuries — no matter how it happened, we can take care of it.

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COOKING, BAKING AND HOSTING

- 1** When cooking on the stovetop, use the back burners of the stove and turn the pot handles away from the edge to discourage children from reaching for them.
- 2** When baking, be sure to securely put away any extracts used. Baking extracts are poisonous for children; if ingested, call poison control immediately.
- 3** Be careful with alcohol, especially sweet or colorful punches, while hosting or attending holiday parties. Children can drink from cups that are left sitting around.