



# Palmetto Poison Center

**For Immediate Release: Please call to schedule interviews**

**December 15, 2009**

Contact: William Richardson, MD  
Medical Director  
(803) 777-9006 (office)  
whrichardson@sc.rr.com

Jill Michels, PharmD  
Managing Director  
(803) 777-7909 (work)  
Michels@cop.sc.edu

## **How to keep the “Happy” in your Holidays**

*The Palmetto Poison Center has information on how to keep your family safe this holiday season.*

This is the time of the year when family and friends come together to celebrate the holidays. As we prepare for this time, we must be vigilant about the possible hazards in our homes, especially if young children are present. The most common holiday hazards people contact the Poison Center for include: Holiday Plants, Decorations, and Alcohol.

### **Holiday Plants**

- **Mistletoe and Holly:** All parts of these plants are poisonous and may cause vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain.
- **Poinsettia:** This plant is not as toxic as once thought. Ingestions of very large amounts may be harmful. A small amount accidentally ingested by a child may result in mild stomach upset. The sap from the plant may cause skin irritation.
- **Christmas Trees:** The sap from Cedar Christmas trees may cause skin irritation. Coniferous trees such as pines, spruces and firs may be harmful if ingested in large amounts. Small amounts may cause stomach upset. The needles can be a choking hazard.
- **Christmas Cactus:** This plant is non-toxic.

### **Decorations**

- **Ornaments and Decorations:** Garland, tinsel, and tree ornaments can be a choking hazard and may also cause injury if they are broken.

### Alcohol

- Left over cocktails, unlabeled alcoholic drinks in the refrigerator and even your gifts of cologne and perfume can be a source for alcohol poisoning in children.
- Ingesting a couple of ounces of liquor can be potentially fatal to a small child weighing around 30 pounds.
- Alcohol consumption can cause a child's blood sugar to drop, which can lead to seizures or a coma.

"Holiday poisonings occur every year because people get out of their normal routine.

Keep in mind that not all homes are poison safe", states Dr. Jill Michels, Clinical Pharmacist and Director of the Palmetto Poison Center at the South Carolina College of Pharmacy at the University of South Carolina. " Accidents can easily be avoided during the holidays if we are take preventative measures by keeping items such as alcohol, cleaners, plants, and medications up and out of reach of children."

The Palmetto Poison Center is staffed by trained nurses and pharmacists who can provide treatment information when a parent needs information about Holiday safety. Additionally, the Palmetto Poison Center provides poison prevention education around the state to inform parents and youngsters not only about the dangers of household poisonings, but also outdoor exposure to poisonous agents. From medication errors to insect bites, poisonous plants, pesticides and other household chemicals, the Palmetto Poison Center can provide expert advice. The Center provides services to over 4 million residents in all 46 counties of South Carolina. Services are free, confidential and

available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To contact the Palmetto Poison Center, call 1-800-222-1222 or visit our website at <http://poison.sc.edu>