

		<b>Central New York Poison Center</b>
<b>1-800-222-1222</b>		

# Poison Prevention

Newsletter

December 2002

 SUNY Upstate Medical University  
**University Hospital** • 750 East Adams Street • Syracuse, NY 13210

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide poisoning is called the *“silent killer”* because you can't see it, taste it or smell it. It is responsible for more than 5,000 accidental deaths a year.

### What is carbon monoxide?

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that is quickly absorbed by the body.

### Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning

Because carbon monoxide poisoning can feel like the flu, it can be hard to know when you are suffering from it. Carbon monoxide causes headaches, dizziness, irritability, confusion, and redness of the skin, or possible confusion and nausea. The majority of people killed are overcome as they sleep.

Before winter sets in, there are several ways you can safeguard your family against accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.

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## Holiday Plants

Holiday plant giving is a great gift idea. If giving a holiday plant to a family with young children or pets, make them aware of the name of the plant and alert them as to whether the plant is toxic or not. The Central NY Poison Control Center reports that 20% of all calls to the Center involve plants. The CNYPC would like to provide you with some important holiday tips to prevent plant poisonings:

**WE CANNOT IDENTIFY PLANTS OVER THE PHONE, WE CAN HELP WITH THE MANAGEMENT IF YOU KNOW THE NAME AND/OR SPECIES OF THE PLANT.**

**Poinsettia** - Also called the Christmas flower. The Poinsettia has received an unfavorable reputation over the years, research shows that only ingestion of **LARGE** amounts of this plant can be harmful. The milky sap from the flower may cause dermatitis.

**Holly** - The stiff green leaves and bright red berries are extremely attractive to children. Holly berries are significantly poisonous, ingestion of twenty berries can mean death to a child.

**Mistletoe** - Often referred to as the “kiss of death.” The berries, leaves, and stem are all considered toxic. Contact the Poison Center if ingestion of any amount occurs.

**Bittersweet** - All parts of this plant are considered toxic. The unripe berries contain the highest concentration of Solanine, which cause heart rate below 60, sedation, and headaches.

**Jerusalem Cherry** - This plant contains bright orange to scarlet colored berries. **The entire plant is TOXIC.** Call the Poison Center if ingested in any amount.

**Pines** - These coniferous trees are commonly found in homes at holiday time. They may be harmful, if ingested in very large amounts. Ingestion of small amounts may result in varying degrees of localized irritation and gastrointestinal upset and a primary concern would be aspiration or airway obstruction. Pine cones are not toxic, although contact dermatitis may result from handling.

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**Poison emergency?  
Poison information?  
Call Us!  
Visit us on the web:  
[www.cnypoison.org](http://www.cnypoison.org)**

# Turkey Talk

With food as the central focus of many holiday gatherings, it's no surprise that the number of food-borne illnesses increases during the holidays. In a time crunch, many cooks take shortcuts in the kitchen that facilitate the spread of germs and harmful bacteria. Improper handling, preparation, cooking or storage could result in cross-contamination, the major source of food poisonings. The following information will help you enjoy a healthy holiday feast. If you have any questions, the CNY Poison Control Center is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## DO -

- **Do** keep turkey in its original wrapping, refrigerated until ready to cook.
- **Do** make sure the sell-by-date has not expired.
- **Do** defrost a frozen turkey by refrigeration or a cold water bath.
- **Do** allow one day for every 5 lbs. in the refrigerator. In a cold water bath, change the water every 30 minutes. A 20 lb. turkey will take 12 hours to defrost in cold water.
- **Do** use a meat thermometer to check if the turkey is done. The turkey should cook until the internal temperature reaches 180-185 degrees.

- **Do** pierce the turkey in the thickest area of the thigh, making sure the juices run clear not pink.
- **Do** remove the stuffing immediately after the turkey is cooked.
- **Do** store the turkey and stuffing separately.
- **Do** store leftover turkey in the refrigerator and use within 3-4 days.
- **Do** store leftover stuffing and gravy in the refrigerator and use within 1-2 days.

## DON'T -

- **Don't** defrost a turkey at room temperature. Bacteria can multiply on outer layers before inner layers have defrosted.
- **Don't** leave an uncooked thawed turkey out of the refrigerator longer than 2 hours.
- **Don't** partially cook the turkey one day and continue roasting the next day.
- **Don't** stuff the bird the night before cooking.
- **Don't** leave leftovers out on the counter longer than 3 hours.
- **Don't** store leftover stuffing in the bird.
- **Don't** re-freeze a thawed uncooked turkey.

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

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- **Have your heating system inspected** by a qualified contractor before you turn your furnace on every fall. A professional will check for incomplete combustion that can create carbon monoxide, as well as cracks in the heat exchanger, back drafts, improper ventilation or leaks that could allow carbon monoxide into your home.
- **Check your chimney or flue** for leaves, branches, bird' nests or other blockage that may have accumulated over the summer. Have it cleaned out if necessary before using.
- **Alternative heating** sources such as space heaters and wood stoves should be checked and are in good condition and used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure you have plenty of ventilation and fresh air when you use these devices.
- **Never use your gas range for heating**, even in power failures. This can lower the amount of oxygen in the kitchen and raise carbon monoxide levels.
- **Avoid** burning coal or charcoal in a closed space, even a garage with the door open.
- **Never leave a car motor running** in a closed garage. It can quickly produce enough carbon monoxide to harm people in the garage and in the rooms above or adjacent to the garage.
- **Install a carbon monoxide detector** that monitors the air for carbon monoxide levels. An alarm sounds if the air reaches a dangerous zone. The detectors are especially appropriate in homes that have a fuel-fired hot-air furnace, space heater(s), a wood stove or fire-place-common household sources of carbon monoxide. Be sure the carbon monoxide detector you purchase is "UL LISTED".

# 'Tis the Season to be Poisoned

John H. Trestrail III, RPh, ABAT

'Twas the morning post-party, when all through the house,  
No adult was stirring, not even your spouse.  
The children, you thought, were asleep in their beds.  
But, what you didn't know, they had other ideas in their heads.

Your house was awash in post-party trash,  
And the kids thought this was a gold mine—better than cash.  
There were ashtrays with butts and glasses with drink.  
And a visitor's purse lay there by the sink.

The kids were delighted and felt ever so free,  
And then their bright eyes-locked onto the tree!  
There was tinsel, and lights that bubbled so merry,  
And a strange plant with fruits, called "Jerusalem Cherry".  
Food was left out on the table all night,  
And if they could have seen the bacteria—what a horrible sight!  
And there by the fireplace was a box shaped just right,  
That contained some powder to make fire colors bright.  
A small toy broke open, and there at their feet,  
Was a round tiny battery that looked good to eat.

As you see your home, where you thought poisons naught,  
On this holiday season, was NOT as safe as you thought!  
As you rose from your sleep and rubbed your eyes free,  
You looked for the kids, and a disaster you see!

You sprang to the phone, not a moment to spare,  
And talked to the folks you knew would be there.  
Your **Poison Center** sure helped you get through the mix,  
And you thought—"How'd we ever get into this fix?"  
For you see holidays can present problems so rare,  
That before they can happen, you must be sure to prepare.

It takes just a moment to think what might be,  
And clean up your trash, so your home's poison free.  
And so, my dear friends, keep the holidays bright,  
Put away all, and sleep peaceful tonight.  
Have a holiday bright, that is full of good cheer,  
And from the staff at your Poison Center—"Have a Safe Year!"

## ENJOY THE HOLIDAYS, BUT BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL HAZARDS!!!

The approaching holiday season promises fun and surprises for children who often become the victims of their own excitement and curiosity. It is important for parents and grandparents to identify potential hazards before children are exposed to them. At the Central New York Poison Center, Registered Nurses trained in toxicology are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in the event of a poison emergency or for poison information questions. We're only a phone call away at 1-800-222-1222.

## Education Training Aids on Loan

Do you have a health fair coming up? Need to enhance your training and presentation display? Did you know that the "Look-alike Kit and Poison Quiz Board" are available from one of our point of service agencies? Yes it is true!

If you are teaching poison prevention in the community and want to add something special to your presentation call the Health Educator at 315-464-5375 and ask about videos, look-alike kits, poison quiz boards and more. It is a proven fact people remember more about presentations that involve seeing, hearing, and touching that just a straight lecture.

One of the most successful teaching tools we offer is the *Look-A-Like Kit*.

In the kit we demonstrate products that are common in most homes and how one product looks like another.

The difference being is one product is safe and the other could be potentially poisonous.

Visit us on the Web at  
[www.cnypoison.org](http://www.cnypoison.org)

For a FREE magnet listing suggested temperatures for cooked meats, call us at 464-5375

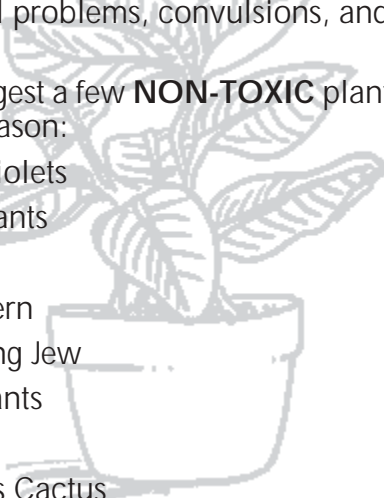
## Holiday Plants

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**Boxwood** - Commonly used in holiday wreaths and roping. The leaves and twigs contain a toxic alkaloid, **buxene**, and ingestion could result in severe gastrointestinal problems, convulsions, and respiratory failure.

May we suggest a few **NON-TOXIC** plants to give this holiday season:

- African violets
- Spider plants
- Jade
- Boston Fern
- Wandering Jew
- Snake plants
- Coleus
- Christmas Cactus
- Wax plant



## Calling Area for the Central New York Poison Center



A Service of the State University of New York  
Upstate Medical University at  
University Hospital, Syracuse.  
A Member of the American Association of  
Poison Control Centers