

It's that time of year again when we enjoy festive meals with family and friends, deck our halls with colorful decorations and listen to squeals of delight as our children open their brightly-wrapped presents. To help ensure your kids have fun and stay safe this holiday, here are a few tips to remember.

Decorate Your Tree With Your Kids in Mind

- Kids are curious and will want to play with the ornaments on the tree, so you might as well prepare. Move the ornaments that are breakable or have metal hooks towards the top of the tree. That makes room at the bottom for the ones that are safer for young kids.



Water the Tree Regularly

- Natural trees look beautiful and smell great, but if they're not watered regularly, needles can dry out and pose a potential fire hazard. Make sure your tree has plenty of water by checking it regularly.

Check the Lights

- Lights are one of the best parts of holiday decorating. Take a look at the ones on your tree and in and around your home for exposed or frayed wires, loose connections or broken sockets.

In 2012, 3,270 children 19 and under were seen in emergency rooms for injuries caused by nonelectric Christmas decorations, like broken ornaments. In 2011, an estimated 193,200 children were treated in an emergency room for a toy-related injury.



Blow Out Candles and Store Matches Out of Reach

- Keep holiday candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn, and don't forget to blow them out when you leave the room or before you go to sleep.
- Make a habit of placing matches and lighters in a safe place, out of children's reach. Avoid novelty lighters or lighters that look like toys.

Keep Harmful Plants Out of Reach

- Plants can spruce up your holiday decorating, but keep those that may be poisonous out of reach of children or pets. This includes mistletoe berries, holly berry, and Jerusalem cherry.
- In a poison emergency, call the national Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Find the Perfect Toy for the Right Age

- Consider your child's age when purchasing a [toy or game](#) this holiday season. It's worth a second to read the instructions and warning labels to make sure the gift is just right.
- Before you've settled on the perfect toy, check to make sure there aren't any small parts or other potential choking hazards.



Keep Button Batteries Away from Young Kids

- Keep a special eye on small pieces, including [button batteries](#) that may be included in electronic toys. While these kinds of games are great for older kids, they can pose a potential danger for younger, curious siblings.

Don't Forget a Helmet for New Bikes or Other Toys

- If your child's heart is set on a bike, skateboard or scooter this holiday season, be sure to include a helmet to keep them safe while they're having fun.



Prevent Spills with Pot Handles

- Kids love to reach, so to [prevent burns](#) from hot holiday food or liquid spills, simply use the back burner of your stove and turn pot handles away from the edge.

Engage Older Kids in Cooking

- Teach older responsible kids how to cook safely. Teach them never to leave the kitchen while they're using the stove or oven. Instruct older kids to use oven mitts or potholders to remove items from the oven or stove and teach them how to use a microwave safely.

Avoid Placing Foods on an Open Oven Door

- Your oven door may not be as strong as you think. To prevent oven tip-overs, place heavy foods or other items on a counter top out of the reach of young children, and not on an open oven door.
- An anti-tip bracket is a valuable tool to prevent oven tip-overs. If you have one, simply follow the manufacturer's instructions to install and use properly.

Check Your Car Seat Before Holiday Travel

- Seventy-three percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly, so before you hit the road, check your car seat. Here's a quick [car seat checklist](#) to help you out. It takes only 15 minutes. If you are having even the slightest trouble, questions or concerns, certified child passenger safety technicians are able to help or even double check your work. [Find a Safe Kids car seat checkup event near you.](#)

Use Booster Seats

- Safety in the car goes beyond your little ones. Kids who have outgrown a forward-facing harness seat are not ready for a seat belt or front seat yet. They are safest in a booster seat that enables the adult seat belt to fit properly. Even when children have graduated from booster seats, they should remain in the back seat until they reach the age of 13.



Have an Exit Strategy on the Road

- So now the car is packed, the kids are in the right seat, the seats are installed properly, and you're on the open road. Nothing can stop you now, right? Wrong. That's when you hear that all too familiar "howl that means "I want food" or "Change my diaper." When it happens, please don't worry about making good time. Instead, get off at the next exit and find a safe area to feed or change your child.