



IT'S YOUR HEALTH

Holiday Safety

The Issue

[Holidays](#) are busy and joyous times for most Canadians, but holiday activities can also create more safety hazards than normal.



Background

[Candles](#) on the table and a tree decorated with lights are often a part of the holiday season in Canadian households. However, these traditions involve some safety risks not often found at other times of the year.

The Health and Safety Risks of Holiday Practices

[Blazing fireplaces](#), a dry evergreen tree, faulty ornamental lights, unsafe sleepwear designs and candles left unattended can all be fire hazards.

[Toys](#) that aren't right for a child's age or those that contain small, loose parts and unsafe packaging materials can prove harmful to young children. Children can

choke on small parts, suffocate on packaging materials or be seriously injured if a toy is not suited to their age.

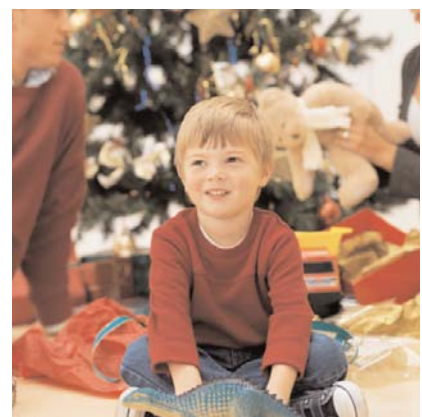
Minimizing Your Risk

Here are some tips to help you enjoy a safe and happy holiday.

Toys and gifts

Choose [toys](#) that are right for the child's age. Be sure to read and follow all warnings and instructions that come with the toy.

- Toys with small loose parts can be dangerous for children under three years of age. Keep them out of reach.
- Make sure batteries in toys are properly installed and not accessible to the child. Do not let children take battery-operated toys to bed.



- Throw out all packing materials like Styrofoam pellets, ties, plastic bags and wrapping as soon as possible. Children can choke or suffocate on them.
- Before using a cosmetic gift for the first time, do a patch test to check if you are sensitive or allergic to something in the cosmetic. To do a test, follow these instructions:
 1. Clean a small area of skin behind your ear or on the inside of your forearm.
 2. Apply a small amount of the cosmetic and allow it to dry.
 3. After 24 hours, wash the area gently with soap and water.

The cosmetic should not be used anymore if the area is red, itchy, burning or blistering.

- Put cosmetic products away and out of the sight and reach of young children after opening them. Some cosmetics are toxic to young children.
- For fire safety, loose-fitting sleepwear (including nightgowns, bathrobes, baby-doll pyjamas and loose pyjamas) must be made from polyester, nylon, or polyester/nylon blends. Tight-fitting styles (such as sleepers or polo pyjamas) may be made from cotton or cotton blends.

Candles

- Never leave burning [candles](#) unattended.
- Keep burning candles out of the reach of children and away from pets, tree decorations or wrapping paper.



- Cut candle wicks short to prevent a high flame.
- If candles are used in a centrepiece, make sure they don't burn low enough to ignite decoration.
- Use sturdy candle holders that won't easily tip over.

Holiday trees

- When buying a real tree, check that it is fresh (needles are hard to pull off). Water the tree daily. Trees can consume up to four litres of water a day. Store the tree in a cool, sheltered area until it is brought indoors for decorating. If it will be several days before it is brought indoors, store it outdoors or on a cool porch or patio. Protect the tree from wind and sun to help it retain its moisture.
- Make sure the tree is well secured in a sturdy stand.
- Place the tree away from high traffic areas, doorways, heating vents, radiators, stoves, fireplaces and burning candles.
- Keep metal tree ornaments and decorations away from young children. Metal decorations may contain lead that can be harmful to young children if they put them in their mouths.
- If young children are around, avoid decorations that are sharp, breakable or have small removable parts, or put those decorations out of reach at the top of the tree.



- Remove the tree right after the holidays or as soon as the needles start to fall to avoid a potential fire hazard. Dispose of it according to local regulations. Many municipalities have tree recycling programs.

Holiday lights

- When decorating your home, only use lights that have been certified by a recognized organization such as CSA, ULC or C-UL.
- Make sure you use indoor lights inside your home and outdoor lights outside.
- Check all light bulbs before use up and replace broken or burned-out bulbs with those recommended by the manufacturer.
- Check the light strings and extension cords you use, throwing out any that are frayed or have exposed wires, loose connections or broken light sockets. Never run electrical cords through doorways or under carpets.

- Do not overload electrical outlets. Use more than one outlet or power bar if the wattage of your lights is more than the outlet can handle.



- Keep bubbling lights away from children. They contain a hazardous chemical that can cause irritation or chemical burns if the bulb breaks and the chemical is released.
- Turn off all holiday lights before you go to bed or leave your home.



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Fireplaces and wood stoves

- Always use a secure, manufacturer recommended screen in front of your [fireplace](#).
- Have the chimney cleaned and inspected at least once a year. This is to help prevent chimney fires. Some chimneys may need more frequent cleaning depending on use.
- Burn hardwood, which will leave less creosote (a flammable dark residue produced by burning wood) in the chimney.
- Never burn wood that has been painted or chemically treated
- Make sure the fire is out before going to bed or before going out.
- Make sure that the chimney is working well so that wood smoke does not come into the room.
- Keep children away from gas fireplaces. When in use, the glass doors can become and stay hot even after use; hot enough to cause serious burns.
- Alarms and Detectors save lives: make sure to have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.



General household safety

- If young children are going to be visiting over the holidays, make sure your house is safe for them by covering electrical outlets, barring stairwells and removing furniture and decorations that may be hazardous to children.
- Keep all cosmetics like perfume, aftershave and nail polish remover, as well as all medications and household chemical products, out of the sight and reach of children and away from heat sources.
- Keep all lighters and matches out of the reach and sight of children.
- Decorations and candles that look or smell like food or candy should be kept out of children's reach. They may be attractive to a child, but could be poisonous or cause choking.
- Keep [smoke alarms](#) and carbon monoxide detectors in good working order.

Health Canada's Role

[Health Canada](#) works closely with a number of partners to promote the safe use of consumer products and protect the public from product-related hazards.

Health Canada monitors the marketplace and takes action on regulated products that do not meet the safety requirements established by the [Hazardous Products Act](#). Potentially hazardous toys and other types of products identified through inspections, consumer complaints or trade

complaints are evaluated at the Product Safety Laboratory.

Need More Info?

For more holiday safety information visit the following websites:

- Health Canada , [Holiday Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/season-saison/holiday-fetes/index-eng.php) web section at :
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/season-saison/holiday-fetes/index-eng.php>
- Contact your nearest Health Canada's [Consumer Product Safety Office](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/contact/cps-spc/index-eng.php) at:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/contact/cps-spc/index-eng.php> or call 1-866-662-0666
- Health Canada, [Consumer Product Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php) web section at :
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/index-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Toy Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/toys-jouets-eng.php) -
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/toys-jouets-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Candle Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php) -
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/candle-bougie-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Wood Smoke](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/envIRON/wood-bois-eng.php) -
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/envIRON/wood-bois-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Holiday Food Safety](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/holiday-fete-eng.php) -
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/holiday-fete-eng.php>
- *It's Your Health*, [Responsible Holiday Drinking](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/drink-boire-eng.php) -
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/drink-boire-eng.php>

- Health Canada, [Fun and Safe Holiday Season](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/holiday-securit-fetes-eng.php) fact sheet:
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/holiday-securit-fetes-eng.php>
- [Safe Kids Canada](http://www.safekidscanada.ca/Parents/Home/index.aspx) at :
<http://www.safekidscanada.ca/Parents/Home/index.aspx>

For safety information about food, health and consumer products visit the [Safe Consumers](http://www.health.gc.ca/consumer) website at:
www.health.gc.ca/consumer

For more articles on health and safety issues go to the [It's Your Health](http://www.health.gc.ca/iyh) web section at: www.health.gc.ca/iyh

You can also call toll free at 1-866-225-0709
or TTY at 1-800-267-1245*