

## Holiday Safety

Children's Mercy wants all children to be healthy and safe, especially during the holidays. Follow these suggestions when buying gifts for children and decorating your home.

### Choosing the Right Toys:

- Be sure the toys you buy for your children match their age, interest and skill level. Children need different toys at different stages of their growth.
- Read labels. Look for age recommendations ("Not recommended for children under 3") and safety labels ("non-toxic," "flame retardant," "flame resistant," etc.).
- Make sure the toy is well made, with no rough edges or small pieces that can break off.
- Check all toys often for breakage and potential hazard. A dangerous toy should be thrown away or repaired right away.

### Avoid toys with these hazards:

- **Loud noises:** Toy caps, some noise-making guns and other toys can produce sounds at noise levels that can damage a child's hearing.
- **Propelled objects:** Guided missiles and other flying toys can cause eye injury to children. Children should not play with lawn darts, hobby supplies or sporting equipment designed for adults.
- **Small parts:** Young children can swallow tiny toys, pieces of toys that have been broken off or small pieces that can be removed from toys, such as the squeakers in some squeeze toys. Small batteries can be very dangerous if swallowed.
- **Sharp edges or points:** Toys made of brittle plastic or glass can break easily, exposing dangerous cutting edges. Wooden, metal and plastic toys sometimes have sharp edges if they are not well constructed. Pins and staples on dolls' clothes and hair accessories, or wired limbs in a stuffed animal can puncture a child.
- **Electric toys:** Electric toys that are not well constructed or misused can shock or burn a child. Make sure electric toys you buy meet safety requirements and toys with heating elements are not given to children under age 8.
- **Remember that toys considered safe for older children can be dangerous in the hands of little ones.**

## **Giving a bicycle or skateboard as a gift?**

- Be sure to include a helmet with every gift of a bicycle, skateboard or in-line skates. Buy only helmets with safety stickers that say "Approved by Snell Memorial Foundation" or "Meets and exceeds ANSI Standards" or ASTM standards.
- Even if your child thinks helmets are not "cool," they could prevent serious head injuries. Children age 6 to 12 are at greatest risk for bicycle crashes.
- Buy a bicycle that fits your child — not one that your child will "grow into it."
- Be sure you teach your children bicycle safety and rules of the road. Children should stay on sidewalks, paths and driveways until age 9.
- If giving skateboards or skates, be sure to include wrist guards, knee and elbow pads, as well as helmets.

## **Safe Decorations:**

- If you choose a live tree, water it regularly. Anchor your tree firmly, so your child can't pull it over. Use only UL-approved lights and inspect them for faulty cords. Place breakable ornaments high enough so young children can't reach them.
- Keep your tree and other decorations away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, heating vents and space heaters.
- Be aware that many holiday decorations can be poisonous or harmful to a child:
  - Mistletoe, holly, and poinsettias can be toxic if eaten.
  - Artificial trees, icicles and tinsel, shellacked bread dough ornaments, and angel hair are especially irritating to a child's digestive tract.
  - Artificial snow sprays can cause lung irritation if inhaled.
  - Colored wrapping paper burned in the fireplace may release poisonous fumes.
- Never leave young children alone in a room with lit candles or a fireplace burning.
- Holiday treats such as peppermints, peanuts and popcorn can cause a young child to choke.
- Keep alcoholic drinks, including eggnog and holiday punch, out of children's reach. Always clean up half-empty drinks left from a party as soon as possible.

**Children's Mercy wishes you and your family  
a very happy and safe holiday season!**