

Light up the holidays safely

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(HealthDay)—Colorful lights and candles can make the holidays sparkle, but child safety should be a priority when decking the halls or trimming a tree, a leading pediatricians' group says.

Christmas trees adorn many homes during the holidays but they can pose fire and other [safety hazards](#) if certain precautions aren't taken, the American Academy of Pediatrics warns.

The group recommends the following tips when decorating or setting up a tree:

- Live trees should be fresh. When shopping for a tree, shake or tap the tree on the ground. If many needles fall off, the tree is already drying out. Before setting up the tree in a stand, cut a few inches off the bottom of its trunk. Make sure the stand is always filled with water.
- Artificial [trees](#) should be labeled fire-resistant. All tree decorations should be nonflammable or fire-resistant.
- Trees should not be set up near a fireplace, radiator or portable heater. Never set up a tree in a spot that blocks a doorway.
- Before putting lights on a tree, be sure that every bulb is in working order and there are no broken sockets or loose connections. Outdoor lights should be certified for outdoor use. When stringing up outdoor lights, use hooks or insulated staples, not nails or tacks. All outdoor electrical decorations should be plugged into circuits with ground fault circuit interrupters. This will prevent shocks.
- Choose plastic or other lead-free tinsel and artificial icicles. Light bulb sockets and wire coating could also contain lead. Be sure these items are kept out of [children's](#) reach. Anyone who handles these items should wash their hands afterwards.
- Be mindful of candles. Never place a flame near a tree or leave burning candles unattended.
- Avoid sharp or breakable decorations if small children are in the home. It's also a good idea to keep decorations with small or removable parts up high out of the reach of [young kids](#), to prevent them from swallowing or choking on them. Decorations

that look like food or candy could also pose a threat to young children who are tempted to eat them.

- Clean up wrapping paper and ribbons. Once gifts are opened, be sure to remove all debris, including bows and tags. These can be fire or choking hazards for small children.
- Keep dangerous holiday plants away from children. Mistletoe berries, Jerusalem cherry and holly berry look festive, but they are poisonous if ingested and should be placed out of reach of young kids and pets.

More information: The National Safety Council provides more [safety tips](#) when preparing for the holidays.

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