

HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CAT HEALTHY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

1. **RIBBONS AND TINSEL** may seem like wonderful toys, but they can be devastating to your cat's intestines. Tinsel is best kept off the tree if you have cats in your household. Your cat will enjoy chasing ribbon, but make sure you are at the other end of the ribbon.
2. **ELECTRIC LIGHT CORDS** may also be tempting to cats and other pets but can cause serious burns or strangulation. Keeping cords hidden and out of reach will help. "Bitter Apple" is a spray with a bitter taste to discourage your cat from chewing cords. Bitter Apple is available at most pet stores.
3. **HOLIDAY PLANTS** vary in their toxicity. **LILIES, AMARYLLIS BULBS and some MISTLETOE** are the most dangerous; **POINSETTIAS, HOLLY, CHRISTMAS TREE NEEDLES** and **CHRISTMAS CACTUS** usually cause irritation and intestinal upset but are less toxic.
4. **CHRISTMAS TREE WATER** may contain fertilizers and stagnant tree water can breed bacterial, but ingestion of a small amount of water is usually tolerated. Covering the water with chicken wire allows you to pour water through but prevents your cat from drinking the water.
5. **FRAGILE ORNAMENTS**, especially glass, may be broken and ingested, as can the ribbon or wire holding the ornaments on the tree.
6. **PINE SAP** is not toxic but is sticky and hard to remove. Oil based products, like vegetable oil or baby oil work better than shampoo.
7. **LIQUID POTPOURRI** can cause burns to the skin or eyes, and can be toxic if ingested.
8. **DRINKS** with milk or cream such as alcoholic eggnog – because of their small size, cats are very sensitive and even small amounts of alcohol can be fatal.
9. At New Year's, **GLOW IN THE DARK JEWELRY AND GLO-STICKS** are fascinating to cats, but, if a cat bites through, the substance, while non-toxic, is extremely bitter tasting. Expect your cat to salivate profusely. Place the cat in a dark room, wipe off any glowing areas you see and try to dilute the taste by using tuna juice.
10. **CHOCOLATE** is usually less an issue with cats than dogs, but can be serious, leading to seizures if a large quantity is ingested.
11. **MEDICATIONS** – If your elderly Aunt Mary is visiting, be vigilant about any medications that may spill. Cats lack some liver enzymes and metabolize many medications poorly; one Tylenol can be fatal to a cat.

So when you "deck the halls", look at the decorations from your cat's perspective to try to forestall the above hazards. Watch your cat when you first set out your tree and greens, and if your cat is fascinated by something hazardous, you may need to redecorate a bit.

Wishing everyone a safe, happy and hazard-free holiday season!

The Doctors and Staff at Exclusively Cats Veterinary Hospital