

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Children should spend the holidays with friends and family, not in the emergency room

The holiday shopping season is already in full swing for retailers as well as shoppers who are eager to begin purchasing everything on their lists. But, when it comes to toys and gifts, the lowest sale price may not be the safest for children.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates in its most recent report that hospital emergency rooms treated 251,700 toy-related injuries in 2010 throughout the U.S. Of that number, 72 percent of injuries were to those less than 15 years of age.

Additionally, the commission found that 46 percent of the injuries occurred to the head and face area. Lacerations, abrasions and contusions made up most of these injuries.

Prevent Blindness America, the nation's oldest eye health and safety organization, has declared December as Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month. The group encourages everyone to make conscientious purchasing decisions based on what is best for each individual child.

"In the excitement of the season, sometimes we may forget that not every gift is appropriate for every child," said Hugh Parry, president of Prevent Blindness America. "By taking a few easy safety precautions, we can keep the holidays happy for everyone!"

Prevent Blindness America suggests:

- Make recommendations to family members and friends about gifts that you feel are appropriate for your child. Be diligent about inspecting these gifts before allowing your child to play with them.
- Inspect all toys before purchasing. Monitor toys that your child has received as gifts to make sure they are appropriate for your child's age and developmental level.
 - For younger children, avoid play sets with small magnets and make sure batteries are secured within the toy. If magnets or batteries are ingested, serious injuries and/or death can occur.
 - Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (such as a basketball along with eye goggles or a face guard with a new batting helmet for baseball or softball).
 - Any toy that is labeled "supervision required" must always be used in the presence of an adult. Keep toys meant for older children away from younger ones.
 - Always save the warranties and directions for every toy. If possible, include a gift receipt. Repair or throw away damaged toys.
 - Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off.
 - Inspect toys for sturdiness. Your child's toys should be durable, with no sharp edges or points. The toys should also withstand impact. Dispose of plastic wrapping material immediately.



Calendar

Today

- Health department closed for training

Dec. 15

- MRC Orientation

Dec. 25

- Health department closed for Christmas

Jan. 1

- Health department closed New Year's Day

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Drinking to excess

Recognize and treat alcohol problems

Some people enjoy an occasional glass of wine with dinner. Others might grab a beer while watching a football game. Most people drink alcohol moderately, within their limits. Others overdo it occasionally. But some people find they can't control their drinking. How do you know when drinking is becoming a problem? And what can you do if it is?

About 18 million Americans have an alcohol use disorder. Drinking too much alcohol raises your risk of injury and accidents, disease, and other health problems. Heavy drinking is one of the leading causes of preventable deaths in this country, contributing to nearly 88,000 deaths each year.

How much is too much? Men shouldn't have more than 14 drinks per week and four drinks on any single day. Women shouldn't have more than seven drinks per week and no more than three drinks on any day. But you might be surprised at what counts as a drink. A 5-ounce glass of table wine, a 12-ounce glass of regular beer, and 1 1/2 ounces of hard liquor each contain the same amount of alcohol,

and each counts as 1 drink. You may need to adjust the amount you drink depending on how alcohol affects you. Some people—such as pregnant women or people taking certain medications—shouldn't drink alcohol at all.

Alcohol problems come from drinking too much, too fast, or too often. People with alcohol dependence are addicted to alcohol, and they can't control their drinking. When alcohol-dependent people try to stop drinking, they may feel anxious and irritable—so they may drink some more, and it becomes a vicious cycle.

“Addiction has 3 major problems: You lose your ability to feel good, you get more stressed, and you have a hard time making proper decisions,” says Dr. George Koob, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. “That’s a recipe for disaster.”

Signs of an alcohol problem include drinking more, or more often, than you intended, or making unsuccessful attempts to cut back or quit. People with alcohol problems often have trouble functioning at work, home, or school.

“A good indicator is that something is out of whack. Is your personal life deteriorating because of your drinking? Are people starting to shun you? If you're feeling generally miserable, that's a warning sign,” Koob says. “You don't have to hit bottom. You'll save yourself a lot of damage socially, professionally, and probably in your own body if you attend to an alcohol problem a lot earlier.”

Studies show that most people with an alcohol use disorder can benefit from some form of treatment. If you or someone you care about may have an alcohol problem, help is available. The first step is to talk to a primary care doctor. In some cases, a brief intervention, or an honest conversation about drinking habits and risks, is all the person needs. If the problem is more serious, the doctor can help create a treatment plan, prescribe medications, or refer the person to a specialist. In more severe cases, the doctor might recommend a treatment clinic or in-patient addiction center.

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Need Info? Call 352-629-0137

Birth & Death Certificates ext. 2064
Communicable Diseases ext. 2088
Dental Clinic 352-622-2664
Environmental Health ext. 2086

Family Planning ext. 2091
Health Education ext. 2195
Healthy Start ext. 2275
HIV/AIDS ext. 2073
Immunizations ext. 2017

Maternity ext. 2089
School Health ext. 2043
Sexually Transmitted Diseases ext. 2073
WIC & Nutrition ext. 2124

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“Alcohol dependence is a complex, diverse disorder. There’s not one treatment that works for everybody,” says Dr. Raye Litten, an alcohol treatment and recovery expert at the National Institutes of Health. “If one treatment doesn’t work, you can try another one. Sometimes a combination of these will work.”

Medications can help people stop or reduce their drinking. Three medications are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for treating alcohol use disorders. One of these, disulfiram, causes unpleasant side effects such as nausea, vomiting, and a racing heart rate if you consume any alcohol while taking the drug. Understandably, some people don’t want to take this medication for that reason. The two other drugs, naltrexone and acamprosate, also have been shown effective at reducing alcohol craving in many heavy drinkers.



Additional medications are under study as possible treatments for alcohol use disorders. These include a handful of medicines already approved to treat other medical conditions. For example, the drug gabapentin is now used to treat pain and other conditions, but it also has shown promise for reducing heavy drinking in clinical research trials. Gabapentin may reduce alcohol cravings as well as anxiety, trouble sleeping, and other symptoms associated with alcohol use disorders.

“There’s not going to be a drug that cures you of alcoholism,” Koob says. “I think that drugs can help you along the way, so that some of the chemical changes in the brain can return to normal. Strengthen that with behavioral therapy to make recovery as permanent as you can.”

Behavioral therapy, such as counseling or support groups, can help people develop skills to avoid or overcome stress and other triggers that could lead to drinking. The approach can help people set realistic goals, identify the feelings and situations that might lead to heavy drinking, and offer tips to manage stress. It also helps to build a strong social support network.

If the treatment plan created by your health care team is working, it’s important to stick to that plan. Many people repeatedly try to cut back or quit drinking, have a setback, then try to quit again. Think of an alcohol relapse as a temporary setback and keep persisting toward full recovery.

“You always have to be aware there’s a possibility of relapse and temptation,” says Koob. “Any recovering alcoholic will tell you it’s a daily fight for a long time.”

National Institutes of Health

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- Don’t give toys with small parts to young children. Young kids tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking. If the part of a toy can fit in a toilet paper roll, the toy is not appropriate for children under the age of 3.

For more information on safe toys and gifts for children as well as general children’s eye health topics, please contact Prevent Blindness America by calling 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

Connect with the Florida Department of Health online