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Holiday Plants Are Not on the Menu

Nation's oldest poison center warns of gastrointestinal distress from three common plants

'Tis the season to be jolly! While Holly, Mistletoe and Poinsettia might make you feel jolly, some winter plants used for decorating can put a damper on your holiday festivities, if ingested. The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) advises people to keep holiday plants and berries out of their mouths no matter how tempting a taste may be.

“Unlike popular belief, these traditional holiday plants are not deadly when consumed,” says Michael Wahl, M.D., medical director, IPC. “However, the side effects are a bit unpleasant and can sidetrack your holiday plans.”

Depending on the quantity, Holly, Mistletoe and Poinsettia will cause stomach upset, including nausea and vomiting, when ingested. To prevent accidental consumption, the IPC has offered the following indoor plant safety tips:

- Keep all live plants and plant material high and out of reach of small children;
- Consider using netting to catch falling leaves and berries;
- Promptly clean areas of plant remnants; and
- Consider using the faux versions of these plants to keep children and pets safe.

If you or someone you know happens to swallow any of these plants, call the IPC at 800-222-1222. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays. The call is free and confidential.

See an [IPC blog post](#) on winter holiday plants for more information.

Visit the [IPC's website](#) for additional educational resources and topics.

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The Illinois Poison Center is a nonprofit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, confidential 24-hour helpline staffed by specially trained physicians, nurses and pharmacists.