

NEWS RELEASE:

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The Holidays and Toy Safety **By Joyce Hooley, MD, BRCHS Pediatrician**

(Hendersonville, NC) During this season of gift giving, those of us lucky enough to have children in our households look forward to the special joy we feel watching them revel in the wrapped presents, the festive decorations, and the candlelight. Unfortunately, in the chaos and commotion that sometimes happens when extended families gather together to unwrap presents, accidents can happen. Most families can remember some family story about a minor accident, like the toddler who took a bite out of the low hanging shiny red ornament that looked like an apple, and had to make a visit to the Emergency Room to have stitches placed in his lip and cheek. Other accidents can have the potential to be more life threatening. Plan ahead this holiday to ensure that this time remains a safe time for your young children. Remember, “safety is no accident,” it takes planning and attention. Here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics about toy safety during the Holidays:

- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don’t give young children (under age ten) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.
- Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Toys for children under age three should not have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.

- Children can have serious stomach and intestinal problems – including death -- after swallowing button batteries and magnets. Keep them away from young children and call your health care provider immediately if your child swallows one.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on un-inflated or broken balloons. Don't allow children to place their mouths on balloons or play unsupervised with balloons. Also remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to prevent them from swallowing or inhaling small pieces. Avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a young child to eat them.
- Place candles out of reach of young children and where they cannot be accidentally bumped over. Do not place them where they can come in contact with flammable greenery. Blow out all candles immediately when the candlelight celebration is over.
- Clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler could rise early and choke on leftover food and small toy pieces, or come in contact with alcohol.
- Remember that the homes you visit may not be childproofed. Keep an eye out for danger spots, such as exposed electric outlets or cords, open stairways, and sharp kitchen utensils within reach of small hands.

Be safe, and have a joyous holiday.

Blue Ridge Community Health Services (BRCHS) has been serving Hendersonville and the surrounding communities for more than 45 years, providing high quality, affordable medical and dental care, increasing access to health care for all, with special emphasis on the underserved and the uninsured. BRCHS health centers include the William F. Stokes Jr. Dental Center, the Kate B. Reynolds Children's Center, Blue Ridge Family Practice, and school-based health centers at Apple Valley Middle School, North Henderson High School, and Bruce Drysdale Elementary School. BRCHS is accredited by the Joint Commission.

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