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Illinois Poison Center Offers Tips to Avoid 4th of July Holiday Hazards

IPC Wants Public to Celebrate Safely This Independence Day

CHICAGO – Cookouts, fireworks and holiday parties with friends and family are common occurrences during the 4th of July holiday, but the celebratory events also pose risk to the public if they don't take the proper precautions to stay safe.

The Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is warning that the warm weather, flammable materials, and outdoor activities can bring poisoning hazards that can ruin any festivities.

“Cases reported to the IPC increase in the summer months by 15%. For the 4th of July, cases include ingesting fireworks, glow sticks and other dangerous chemicals,” says IPC Medical Director Michael Wahl, MD. “We want to make sure families are taking every precaution to protect their loved ones and ensure everyone can enjoy the celebrations.”

Before firing up the grill and watching the fireworks, review these simple safety precautions from the IPC.

DO:

- Keep all tiki torch oils, lighter fluids and other flammables in their original containers, locked up and out of the reach of children. Ingesting these products can lead to severe lung damage, and can be fatal;
- Open and use all pool chemicals in a very well-ventilated area, and wear eye and skin protection;
- Keep young children away from open alcohol containers, as small amounts of alcohol can cause dizziness, nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, or coma in toddlers due to their small size and weight;
- Keep cannabis and hemp sweet treats (e.g. gummies) out of sight and out of reach of toddlers. Children cannot tell the difference between infused edibles and normal candies and baked goods;
- Wear clothing that will cover as much exposed skin as possible in order to protect from plant poisonings, like poison ivy, and insect bites and stings; and
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold to avoid food poisoning.

DON'T:

- Let children put fireworks in their mouths. Fireworks contain a variety of poisonous chemicals such as arsenic, barium chlorate, phosphorus and potassium nitrate. Symptoms from eating fireworks can range from mild to severe;
- Let children put glow sticks or other substances in their mouths—liquid in the tube may cause skin, eye or stomach irritation, swelling and pain around the mouth, or persistent nausea and vomiting;
- Leave food out of the refrigerator for more than two hours after cooking; and
- Eat wild mushrooms, berries or other plants. Never assume a plant is non-toxic because birds or wildlife eat it.

Families celebrating should also take extra precautions during hot summer days. According to IPC, certain medications can make people more susceptible to injury from excessive heat, which can lead to organ damage and even death (heat stroke). IPC advises the following tips:

- Avoid becoming dehydrated. Drink plenty of fluids, even if you're not thirsty.
- Avoid caffeinated or alcoholic beverages as this will increase water excretion through the kidneys.
- Wear cool, light-colored clothing.
- Air-conditioning is the best way to avoid heat stroke during hot summer spells. If you do not have access to air-conditioning, know where the public community cooling centers are located. These are frequently shopping malls, libraries and other public places to seek refuge from extreme heat.

For more information on summertime safety, please visit the [IPC Summer Safety](#) page.

IPC's toxicology specialists, who serve most all languages, resolve over 90% of poison exposure cases over the phone, eliminating the need for referral to a healthcare facility. IPC staff serve as toxicology consultants to Illinois healthcare professionals, whose inquiries represent nearly one-third of yearly poisoning cases. Calls to the IPC helpline (1-800-222-1222) are free and confidential. IPC experts are available to provide information and treatment advice 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, including holidays.

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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.