



Celebrate the Fourth of July Safe from Poisons!

Barbecues, picnics and firework displays are time-honored traditions to help celebrate our country's birth, but they are not without poisoning hazards. Stay safe this holiday season by taking a few extra precautions when using the following products:

Charcoal and lighter fluid (for grills): Self-lighting charcoal and lighter fluid are dangerous products when aspirated (taken into the lungs). They are considered hydrocarbons, which can coat the lungs and create serious respiratory problems and, potentially, lead to death. Charcoal can pose a choking hazard.

Alcohol: Be sure to place all alcoholic beverages, such as beer and wine coolers, up high and out of the reach of children. Children are more apt to drink unfinished alcoholic beverages during holidays, when parties and celebrations are taking place. Alcohol can be very dangerous, even fatal, to small children, as well as to pets.

The symptoms of an alcohol overdose may be mild, such as stimulation, dizziness and nausea, or they may progress to more serious complications, such as vomiting, drowsiness, difficulty breathing, coma and death.

Food: Take extra precautions while preparing, cooking and storing food in warm weather.

Improper storage can lead to food poisoning. The IPC recommends the following:

- Pack hot foods in insulated containers so they stay hot.
- Pack refrigerated foods just before leaving home; use well-insulated coolers that allow space for ice packs.
- If grilling, pack additional clean plates to avoid cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods.

- Never leave a cooler in the trunk or car; place it in a shaded area and cover it with a blanket.
- Cook foods as close to serving time as possible to limit bacterial growth.
- Refrigerate food within two hours after cooking.

Food poisoning is caused by bacteria, which grows in certain foods, such as gravy and cream sauces, when they are not handled, cooked or stored properly. Symptoms of the most common types of food poisoning may include nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea and fever. One or more of these symptoms usually develop within a few hours to a few days after eating the contaminated food.

Fireworks: Certain fireworks contain chlorates, which can cause the blood to be unable to carry oxygen. If eaten, these fireworks can be very dangerous, and sometimes fatal.

Glow sticks: Popular at outdoor fireworks displays and festivals, these products contain a liquid that can be a skin, eye and stomach irritant. Check for leaks, and do not let children bite or chew on any of these products. Discard immediately if a glow stick begins to leak. If the fluid gets on the skin, immediately wash the affected area with soap and water.

Insect repellents: Be sure to pack the insect repellents if you intend to watch fireworks in a grassy area. Make sure the repellent you are using on your child has less than 10 percent DEET (one of the active ingredients in most repellents). Insecticides with more than 10 percent DEET have been reported to cause brain toxicity in children. Read product labels carefully.