

Protect Your Pet From Holiday Perils

With the holiday season comes good times and cheer. While we want to include our furry friends in the glad tidings, it's important to remember that the holidays can also bring unique experiences that can cause injury or stress to our pets.

The focal point of holiday decorations, a Christmas tree can also pique your pets interest with flashing lights, bright colors and new smells. Edible decorations like cookies, cranberries or popcorn strings are just too enticing for pets to pass up, and bright, dangling ornaments are calling to be batted in the mind of a cat.

Tugging at these could topple the tree, and broken pieces can injure paws or mouths, which is why it's important to anchor your tree securely to prevent tipping by climbing cats or wagging tails.

If you're putting up a natural tree this year, take extra precaution. Remove fallen pine needles quickly, as they can be toxic or can puncture the digestive tract if ingested. Prevent your pet from drinking tree water, which may contain fertilizers or preservatives that can cause stomach upset or poisoning. The stagnant tree water is also a breeding ground for bacteria that could cause nausea or diarrhea, should your cat or dog decide to take a drink.

Pets are easily injured by decorative lights — causing burns, electric shock, or even electrocution — if they chew through wiring from lights or extension cords. To prevent this, keep them safely secured from pets. Better yet, invest in pet-proof extension cords, or spray the wiring with chew deterrent products to make them less enticing.

Although they add a festive touch, many holiday house plants can harm pets. Hang mistletoe and holly out of reach. Mistletoe berries are highly toxic, potentially causing stomach upset and fatal heart problems. Holly can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and lethargy. Lilies can be deadly to cats, and many types can cause kidney failure. Even though poinsettias are not as toxic as many people think, they can still upset your pet's digestive system.

Don't leave lighted candles unattended. Pets may burn themselves or create a fire by knocking over lit candles. Be sure to use appropriate candle holders and place them



on a stable surface when displayed. And, some candle fumes can also be harmful to birds.

When gift wrapping, be sure to keep pets away. Chewing of wrapping paper, string, ribbons, plastic or cloth could cause intestinal blockages. Scissors are another hazard that should be kept off floors or low tables.

Before giving in to those gorgeous, pleading eyes and feeding leftovers to your pet, be aware of harmful, even deadly consequences, of feeding "people food" to your furry friend. While tasty for

us, a fatty piece of meat can contribute to pet obesity and undigestible bones can easily cause choking. One way to reduce the temptation is to feed your pet before guests arrive, so they will be less likely to beg and steal food. Keep a supply of pet treats handy, and reach for one before you're tempted to toss your pet that little bite of the holiday meal.

You can make the holidays special for your pets by providing some extra love and attention to let them know they're not forgotten during this busy time. Take your dog for a long walk, which will help both of you relieve some holiday stress! When hosting a holiday party, provide your dog or cat a quiet space to retreat that is complete with fresh water and a place to snuggle.

Most of us will not forget our pets during gift giving. But, if stuffing a stocking for your pet, stick with toys that are basically indestructible. A great gift for dogs is something like a Kong that can be stuffed with healthy foods or chew treats designed to be safely digestible. A favorite cat specialty item is a warm bed or a new scratching post, complete with fresh catnip.

Keep your pets in mind as you count down to the New Year as well. Be aware that strings of thrown confetti can get lodged in a cat's intestines if eaten. Noisy poppers and fireworks can terrify pets and cause possible damage to sensitive ears.

We hope you enjoy festive holidays...just make sure to do it in a way that is safe for your pets too! For additional holiday pet safety tips, please click [HERE](#).

Swap Fats And Calories For Flavor This Holiday

The holiday season is upon us, when many will enjoy the bounty of the season by attending festive parties and nibbling on leftovers from family get-togethers. With so much eating, it's common to fear gaining weight and packing on additional, unwanted pounds. Studies show that the average person will gain one to two pounds of weight from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day, and most times, that weight stays on as permanent baggage.

It is no surprise that this weight gain occurs, considering that the average American consumes approximately 4,500 calories and 229 grams of fat when eating a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. And, that doesn't include breakfast, lunch, or late-night snacking on top of the meal. Instead of feeling guilty about your holiday eating, why not substitute some healthier options for your favorite foods and save calories and fat grams in the process?

For the main course and sides, there are several healthier options that you can choose. Swap out potatoes for sweet potatoes or "faux-potatoes," which are mashed cauliflower flavored with coconut milk. Sweet potatoes are high in fiber as well as beta-carotene. Instead of macaroni or linguini, try spaghetti squash or quinoa — a gluten-free, nutrient rich pasta alternative. In terms of the turkey, roast, ham, goose, fish, or whatever meat you serve, the best advice is to be mindful of the portion size, limiting to a 6 oz. or less per serving.

You can also substitute ingredients for desserts to lower calories. For baking, use whole-wheat flour as a substitute for half of the white flour called for in your favorite recipes.



Whole grains are necessary for our bodies because they contain many nutrients vital for health, such as dietary fiber and B vitamins. Top off your favorite pies and desserts with frozen or no-fat yogurt versus the usual whipped topping or ice cream to save fat and calories. Dairy products, such as yogurt, provide our bodies with calcium, potassium, vitamin D and protein.

Keeping these options in mind, and making simple changes not only over the holiday season but throughout the year, may help reduce unwanted weight gains.

HEALTHY RECIPES

Each month, we take a traditional recipe and offer a healthier alternative. This time, we're preparing a favorite side that goes along with meals during any season of the year.

Classic Macaroni and Cheese

Recipe makes eight, 1/2 cup servings. One serving contains 200 calories, four grams of fat, 120 mg of sodium, 29 grams of carbohydrates, one gram of fiber and 11 grams of protein.

Ingredients

2 cups macaroni
 1/2 cup onions (chopped)
 1/2 cup evaporated milk, fat-free
 1 medium egg, beaten
 1/4 tsp black pepper
 1 1/4 cups low-fat, sharp cheddar cheese (finely shredded)
 non-stick cooking spray to coat casserole dish

Steps:

1. Cook macaroni according to box directions. Drain and set aside after reaching desired tenderness.
2. Spray casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray. Preheat oven to 350° F.
3. Spray saucepan with non-stick cooking spray and saute onions in the saucepan for about three minutes.
4. In a separate bowl, combine cooked macaroni, onions and other ingredients. Mix thoroughly.
5. Spread macaroni mixture into casserole dish.
6. Bake for 25 minutes and remove. Allow mixture to set for approximately 10 minutes before serving.

(Recipe courtesy of *A Healthier You* -

www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/html/recipes.html)

EAT THIS, NOT THAT

SWAP THIS

for

THAT

Sweet Potatoes
 Mashed cauliflower

Potatoes

Spaghetti Squash
 Quinoa

Pasta

Hummus

French Onion Dip

Frozen Yogurt

Ice Cream

Whole-wheat flour

White Flour

Helpful Phone Numbers

Division of Public Health (636) 949-7400	WIC (636) 949-7402
Immunizations (636) 949-1857	Recycle Works Central (636) 949-1800
Vital Records (636) 949-7558	Recycle Works West (636) 949-1800
Health Education and STD Clinic (636) 949-7401	Division of Humane Services Pet Adoption Center
Division of Environmental Health and Protection (636) 949-1800	(636) 949-7387 (636) 949-7347

Keep Safe And Warm With Winter Weather Tips

When temperatures drop and winter storms bring precipitation, staying safe and warm can be difficult. Extremely cold temperatures and brisk winds can lead to life-threatening situations, while snowy or icy roads can make travel treacherous.

Exposure to freezing temperatures, even for just a short while, can lead to hypothermia or frostbite. Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature drops too low and impacts brain function. Warning signs of hypothermia include extreme shivering, confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness or low energy, and bright red, cold skin. If you notice any of these signs and the body temperature is lower than normal, begin warming the person with blankets, beverages or shelter and seek medical attention. Frostbite is the actual freezing of body parts and is usually indicated by numbness and white

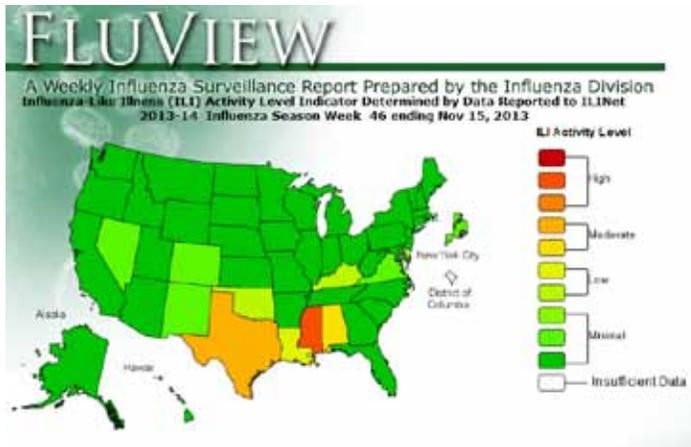
or greyish skin. Seek immediate medical attention in cases of frostbite and gradually warm the affected areas.

To prevent hypothermia or frostbite, adults and children should take extra precaution. Wear layers to trap warm air and allow for removal of clothing if you become overheated. Wearing a hat, scarf and mittens or gloves will prevent heat from escaping through extremities. Lastly, avoid alcohol and caffeine, as these cause your body to lose heat more rapidly.



Traveling in winter weather can be another challenge. When walking, be extra careful in icy areas and avoid waterways. When sledding or exercising, know the surrounding area to prevent impact injuries and avoid overexertion that can lead to hypothermia or heart strain. If you do need to drive in snow or ice, be aware that bridges or overpasses can be covered in hidden "black ice." If you become stranded in your car, it's advised to stay where you are and use a cell phone to call for help.

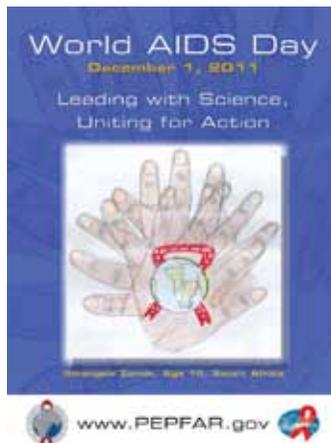
Plan ahead to be safe when traveling. Listen for weather reports and travel advisories. Pack extra supplies like blankets, jumper cables, a radio, flashlight, clothes, and food in your car in case you do become disabled. And, be sure to alert someone to your route and destination.



Get Tested To Learn The Facts About HIV, AIDS

Observed on December 1 each year, **WORLD AIDS DAY** raises awareness for this global pandemic that has killed more than 25 million. While it does not garner as much attention as in previous years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 34 million people worldwide (and more than 1 million Americans) are currently living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and that many of those are unaware that they're affected.

HIV attacks the immune system, limiting the ability to fight infection, and this virus can lead to Acquired



Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). There is currently no cure for HIV, which means that once diagnosed a person has it for life. However, treatment has been shown to slow or prevent progression of the illness.

AIDS is the final stage of the HIV progression, and it occurs when the virus overwhelms the immune system. This causes a person to be vulnerable to infections and other illnesses. People diagnosed with AIDS require medical treatment to prevent death.

The only way to know your health status for sure is to get tested regularly. The Division of Public Health's STD Clinic offers testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases on an appointment basis. Appointments are

scheduled on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:20 to 11:20 a.m., and from 1:20 to 4:20 p.m. Visits to the Clinic are \$10, and testing for HIV includes a blood draw. For information or to schedule an appointment, please call (636) 949-7401 or visit our [WEBSITE](#).

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Coming To A Screen Near You....

To keep residents, businesses and others interested in public health issues related to St. Charles County better informed, the department works with the County's Video Production staff on specific programming.

Two health focused programs air on the County's SCCMO-TV network, "Humane Touch" and "Safe and Sound." This programming is broadcast daily through Charter Cable on channel 993 and on AT&T U-Verse on channel 99. In addition, viewers may stream the shows online or view individual programs through the Video on Demand link within the [COUNTY'S WEBSITE](#).

"Humane Touch" is dedicated to information related to the Pet Adoption Center. Each program lists animals that are available for adoption at the time of taping. In addition, Division of Humane Services staff, veterinarians and other animal care-givers provide safety, grooming and training tips that will help your pet throughout the year.

Another program, "Safe and Sound," provides interviews and segments highlighting health and safety topics affecting St. Charles County residents. Several



segments surrounding a central theme are featured during this 30-minute program each month.

In addition to health programs, SCCMO-TV is also the site for many other County-related programming. Live and taped broadcasts of the St. Charles County Council, Planning & Zoning Commission, and other public meetings are available. In addition, the monthly "Around the County" program highlights upcoming regional events and "Focus St. Charles

County" further examines interesting features within our region.

Give A Natural Gift This Holiday Season



After the holiday, recycle your natural Christmas tree at sites throughout St. Charles County. This service is available at no cost to you!

Call (636) 949-1800 for locations near you.

Volunteers Protect People And Pets

For the last four years, the nationwide County Health Rankings has cited community activity and support as one of the key reasons that St. Charles County is annually placed at the top of Missouri's healthiest counties. Volunteers play a crucial role in helping the Department of Community Health and the Environment's successful operation by strengthening existing services and contributing new ideas, skills and perspectives.

Individuals of all skill levels are invited to join our volunteer team. While there are no special abilities needed to contribute, each volunteer is given comprehensive training and orientation to extend skills necessary to complete the task.

Here are two of the many volunteer opportunities available within the department:

- Tasked with protecting animals from inhumane treatment and placing adoptable animals in loving homes, the Pet Adoption Center seeks individuals aged 18 or older to care for dogs and cats at the facility and to prepare pets for adoption. For information on becoming a Pet Adoption Center volunteer, please call (636) 949-PETS.

- The department also seeks community support to assist in response to potential emergencies. Those with medical expertise are especially critical, but assistance



from those of all abilities is needed. Our Medical Reserve Corps volunteers will contribute on an as-needed basis and will undergo periodical trainings and updates to be prepared for a potential need. If you or your organization would be interested in serving the MRC, please call Andrew Willman at (636) 949-7554.