

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Media Contact: Mindy Baxter

214-648-3404

melinda.baxter@utsouthwestern.edu

## **UT SOUTHWESTERN EMERGENCY MEDICINE PHYSICIANS OFFER TIPS ON HOLIDAY SAFETY**

DALLAS – Dec. 5, 2001 – The holidays can be an unsafe time without the proper precautions. UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas emergency medicine physicians offer advice for staying healthy and happy this holiday season.

### **ALCOHOL CAN HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES**

Alcohol and holiday parties may go hand in hand, but alcohol and driving never should.

“Seventy-five percent of the serious motor-vehicle accident injuries we see in the emergency room are alcohol-related,” says Dr. Kathleen Delaney, UT Southwestern professor of emergency medicine. “Very serious consequences can ensue from drinking and driving.”

Delaney suggests calling a taxi, arranging for a designated driver or simply not drinking to stay safe during the holiday party season.

“It’s just never safe to drink and drive,” she says.

### **COZY FIREPLACE COULD CAUSE CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING**

If everyone in your house develops a headache at the same time, UT Southwestern physicians say you'd better check your fireplace or other possible sources of carbon monoxide right away.

“Carbon monoxide can come from anything that burns inefficiently,” says Dr. Greene Shepherd, clinical assistant professor of emergency medicine at UT Southwestern and director of the North Texas Poison Center. “That includes any improperly working wood or gas-burning fireplaces, water heaters and heating systems. Pets and children are often the first to show signs of carbon monoxide poisoning, so watch them closely.”

Shepherd says people who use fireplaces or have gas heat in their homes should make sure they have a working carbon monoxide detector in the house.

“Installing a carbon monoxide detector is as easy as installing a smoke detector, and it could save your life,” he says.

For more information, call the North Texas Poison Center at 800-222-1222.

(MORE)

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## **HOLIDAY SAFETY – 2**

### **DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT YOUR JACKET**

A quick run to the grocery store in cold weather could turn into disaster if you have a flat tire or dead battery. Dr. Paul Pepe, UT Southwestern chairman of emergency medicine, says getting caught in the cold unprepared can lead to hypothermia, a potentially dangerous condition.

“You should always be ready to spend an hour in the cold when you leave,” he says. “Even running a quick errand, you need to leave the house with your jacket so you’re prepared.”

Pepe also recommends carrying a couple of extra blankets in your trunk with a flashlight and some water.

### **FALLING SNOW CAN LEAD TO ACCIDENTS**

With wet weather and slippery sidewalks, your chances of being injured during a fall are greater. Dr. Kurt Kleinschmidt, UT Southwestern associate professor of emergency medicine, says a fall can cause serious injury.

“Falling is very common and can cause broken bones and other serious injuries,” Kleinschmidt said. “Keep your sidewalks and outside paths clear of ice. Use handrails when walking in steps. Sometimes walking on grass may be safer than on concrete with ice. Think twice before using ladders outside when it is icy. Keep pathways in your house clear of any hazards such as gift wrap or boxes.”

Kleinschmidt suggests extra caution for the elderly. If you have elderly guests staying with you during the holidays, install nightlights in the hallways.

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