

Top 3 Holiday Hazards to Avoid

The holidays can present many hazards due to decorating and activities. Hear from a Kaiser Permanente trauma surgeon about the most common holiday hazards and simple preventive steps that can help keep you safe this season.

Each year, many of us go to great lengths to get into the holiday spirit. We climb on high ladders to put up fanciful decorations, whip up elaborate meals in packed kitchens, and maybe consume a bit too much — in both food and drink — at holiday parties.

From kitchen burns to decorating-related falls, millions of Americans are reporting holiday catastrophes. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, over 12,500 people in the U.S. each year experience holiday-related accidental injuries that land them in the Emergency Department.

Look insideKP Northern California sat down with [Lillian DiGiacomo, MD](#), a trauma surgeon at the Kaiser Permanente South Sacramento Medical Center, to discuss the top 3 injuries she sees during the holidays and tips to prevent them from happening.

Think Twice Before Getting Behind the Wheel

“More driving at night after parties and increased drunk or buzzed driving tends to spike during the holidays,” said Dr. DiGiacomo. “Wear a seat belt, get your car ready for winter weather conditions, and don’t drink and drive.”

She urges you to not get behind the wheel if you just had even a little bit to drink.

“Buzzed driving is still drunk driving,” she said. “It’s difficult to know your own legal limit, as we all have different bodies and it depends on how much you’ve eaten that day. Motor vehicle collisions are the number 1 type of traumatic injury we see at the Kaiser Permanente South Sacramento Trauma Center.”

Get Help When Decorating

Dr. DiGiacomo says that falls are the second most common injury she and her team see. And during the holidays, falls from decorating are increasingly common, especially among an elderly population.

She recommends hiring someone or getting a younger family member to help hang any high decorations. And store supplies and decorations in easy-to-reach places instead of high in a closet or up in an attic.

“Alcohol can tend to play a role in decorating injuries, too. One is more likely to lose their footing while on a ladder or chair. Also, keep cords coiled and put away, and make sure they aren’t out in areas where people are likely to walk,” Dr. DiGiacomo added.

Stay Focused in the Kitchen

“Cooking related injuries, such as burns and cuts, are common during the holidays,” said Dr. DiGiacomo. “Especially as distractions increase, such as family and friends visiting or dogs running under foot. There always tends to be more activity in the kitchen during the holidays, too, an area where people enjoy congregating.”

She recommends taking extra care when opening and closing the oven and when using knives — curling your fingers under when chopping and keeping sharp cooking implements away from children or at the edges of countertops where they could easily fall.

“The holidays are a joyous time to come together, but it’s also important to remember to stay safe. We here at Kaiser Permanente are focused on prevention across all that we do, so people can live their healthiest, most fulfilled lives.”