

## Lead Can Lurk in Yuletide Decorations

If you are planning on putting up Christmas lights or an artificial Christmas tree this year, we ask that you take a few extra precautions to protect your health.



Many people buy artificial Christmas trees to avoid the mess of dropped needles spreading throughout their homes. Unfortunately, that pristine artificial tree could be spreading something more than just its branches.

Most artificial trees are manufactured in China and made from two items: PVC (polyvinylchloride), and lead, used to stabilize the PVC. The lead in the “greens” breaks down into lead dust. When released into the air, the dust can be harmful to everyone, especially children younger than age six.

Christmas lights also contain trace amounts of lead. It's applied to the PVC coating on the wiring to prevent the plastic from cracking and crumbling, to protect the string of lights from heat and moisture, and to act as a flame retardant.

Lead is a dangerous neurotoxin that can cause significant health problems. Each year in the United States roughly a quarter million children below the age of six are found to have unsafe levels of lead in their blood. This early exposure can cause learning disabilities, behavior issues, speech and language impairment, attention deficit disorder and growth issues. In adults, lead exposure can cause fertility problems, high blood pressure, and digestive and nerve disorders.

Studies have shown that you can get lead on your hands when you handle lights and artificial trees. You can inadvertently ingest it if you touch your mouth with your hands. Lead can also be released into the air during installation and removal.

Here's what you can do to reduce your chances of lead exposure:

- Keep infants, young children, and pets out of the area while setting up and removing the tree and lights.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after handling the tree and lights. Lead is not absorbed through the skin, so your primary risk is eating after handling them.
- Use a Hepa vacuum to clean up the area after setting up and taking down the tree and lights.

These common -sense precautions, will help you and yours enjoy a safe and healthy holiday season

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!