

John Griswold, M.D.

What are the most typical traumatic injuries people experience around the holiday season?

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The two main causes of injury starting around Thanksgiving and moving into Christmas, either is related to actually cooking and cooking for relatives or large groups. And having a lot of people around while that cooking is happening, so burn injuries, and we actually see an increased risk of burn injuries from the cold weather coming in. And people trying to heat their homes in various ways or, or not having well functioning heaters that malfunction. So those are the main burn related injuries that we see. And the second thing, unfortunately, the weather gets bad, and the car wrecks go up. And that usually, not only do we see an increase in automobile crashes, but they're usually with multiple passengers. Again, people traveling with family going various places. And so the number of injured individuals injured in each of those car wrecks goes up as well. So the safety of the road is an issue cooking during family gatherings, and then trying to heat the home are the categories of injuries we see.

How can people try to prevent those types of injuries?

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Really, the probably the first thing is that everyone is trying to have fun and enjoy the holidays. And it oftentimes means relatives coming or being in a in a home with more people than usual. And what we recommend to families and individuals is to rather than only focusing on what's going to make it fun and enjoyable. Take a moment to make sure that the environment is safe. It's going to pay off in well, in the long run to just take that a few minutes and say is there something about the environment that could put someone at risk for getting hurt. So in the kitchen, we tell people first of all, don't leave the kitchen, when something's cooking on the stovetop, don't leave the house when the turkeys in the oven and check on the turkey regularly. You know, some people probably think that that's safe to do but it's not and it generally only takes a second for a problem to happen. We talk about things like you know the safety around the stovetop and kitchen counters, making sure that knife handles don't hang over the counter, making sure that the electrical cords to some electrical appliances involved with cooking doesn't hang down where it can get tripped over, and snagged and pulled down or a child can grab it. Pot handles turned in so that somebody can't knock into a pot of boiling water or what have you and burn themselves or those around them. We oftentimes these gatherings have little children and the kitchen during cooking is not a place for a child. And so we recommend that there they stay at least three to five feet away from the cooking area. And we recommend that you get with the children and explain to them why they can't come to where they need to be and almost put in a barrier or at least make sure the kids know where they can't go into so that they don't get injured. Because our burned children numbers go way up during the holidays too which is really really sad. If a fire is to happen, you want to be if you think you can handle it yourself. Don't throw flour or water on a frying pan that's caught on fire tried to smother it with a pot handle or a really thick hand towel and don't remove it until the heat is gone. It should you should let that pot or frying pan cool to the point where you can touch it and it's not going to burn you before you take the covering off. But really, if you're worried at all, just leave the home and call 911. The other sad stories we have we end up dealing with are people who try to put the fire out and then get trapped in the home and get badly injured. You know the number one cause of residential fires in the United States is cooking. And that goes way up during the holidays and we want

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everyone to have fun. We want them to enjoy it. So take that time to make sure the environment is safe.

What precautions should people take before traveling?

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Kind of think of it in a couple of ways. The first thing is if you're leaving your comfortable environment what you're used to make sure you take with you the things that are that you have to have, like prescription medication. That's probably the number one thing that we hear that people have forgotten and go come to town to visit here. And we're trying to help them find or get those medications, at least to tide them over until they get back home. So remember those things. We are in an electronic age, and everyone is used to using their phones, make sure you've got your charger cords, and that you've got a way to charge your phone and always have a phone charge when we're traveling. And people are playing with their phone or using your phone for various things. But you when you're in the car traveling with family, there's got to be a phone that's constantly charged, because that's going to be your lifeline. If you get stranded. We, and then we have people think about the travel time, everybody's got to wear their seatbelts. It's not fun when you're driving long distances. But what's worse is if you get into a wreck and somebody gets badly injured, that would destroy any of that fun that you're working, you're heading towards. Children, they've got to be belted in or the if they're small enough, they need to be in car seats, that's just the way it has to be, they're going to fuss, and not going to like it. But it's better to be fussy and unhappy than to have gotten injured from a wreck. Carry with you plenty of water and things to keep you warm. Gosh, if you gets stranded for a couple of hours while you're waiting for help. You want blankets and things that you can keep warm if your car isn't working, and you can't use your car heater. So those are the things we think about in the process of traveling. And then when you get someplace, again, this is going to be kind of an unfamiliar area, there's probably going to be more people than you're used to just think for a few minutes about where you are get oriented to things. Especially if you have children or elderly patient, family members, gosh, they can get really disoriented. And so you need to take some time just to get them familiar with things so that they have a comfort level of this new place that they're visiting.

Are there any other things you want people to keep in mind before celebrating any holiday?

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Well, again, just have to remember that the safety component of any holiday and celebration with family stays that way if you take a few minutes and think about it. Like you mentioned, you're usually in a hurry a lot of excitement, your mind's not specifically on things that might hurt you. So you almost have to force yourself to think about that. It's not something that you want to think about, necessarily, but gosh, the few minutes that you do is going to pay off in the in the long run. And, be patient try to not be too hectic about things. Because the faster you go, and the more hectic you are, the more chance there is for an injury. So you just have to take a deep breath and, make sure that you're thinking about safety while you're having fun.

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Are there safety issues people should keep in mind when decorating for the holidays?

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There are a lot of decorations that come out around the holidays, and there's a lot of, again, electricity that can be damaging. Unfortunately, it's interesting that it's the time when toddlers oftentimes get electrical injuries. And it has to do with the electrical cords, you know extension cords for the tree lights or whatever the decoration might be. And either the power cord isn't safe, it's got a tear in it or something. And we actually have kids, you know, crawling around on the floor, they'll actually chew on those cords and break through the insulation and get a bad electrical burn to their mouth. We've already had one child admitted, this week for an electrical burn to the mouth from chewing on it. You just got lost, people weren't really thinking about where the child was and chewed through the insulation. So those kinds of things. And then you know, a lot of people just talking about the decorations, they start doing things that they don't normally do like climbing way up on a ladder or trying to get up on the roof and, you know, kind of crazy things and if you thought about it, if you took a minute and thought about you think why did I Why am I doing this? Or why would I do this? If I don't feel safe doing it regularly. So don't take on things that put you in harm's way I think is the other part of it just if you know get get help putting up decorations if it's something that's has a little bit unstable or doing things or climbing heights that aren't normal for you.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

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And one last thing I'd like to mention is thinking about firearms around the house. You know gosh you'll have people coming to the house that may not be familiar with things. Just if you haven't guns around the house, lock them up, make sure that they're not easily accessible especially to children. It's so easy to have an injury for people who aren't aware of handling guns or especially children. So if you can keep those firearms safe and locked away, when folks are visiting your house, that's going to be an important thing from a safety perspective.