

## Dangerous Decorations

**Keep your cat's safety in mind as you decorate your home for the holidays.**

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Shortly after we adopted our Cornish Rex, Jordan, a good friend asked me if the cat had singed his whiskers on a candle. I explained that Jordans short, stubbly whiskers were a characteristic of his breed, but the question made me think about the decorations in my home. Could Jordan singe his whiskers on a lit candle? Or harm himself on any of the other items I kept in my home?

Ask yourself the same question as you deck the halls for the holidays. Could your curious cat injure herself exploring the tempting new items placed throughout her territory? Here are some of the more common holiday hazards and suggestions on how to make them safe for your cat.

1. Figurines and decorative knickknacks. Your nativity set, with its beautiful figurines, looks gorgeous displayed in your home until your cat knocks the ceramic pieces onto the floor, one by one. Not only is such an act infuriating, but the shards of glass can cut your cats delicate paw pads or other body parts, resulting in a trip to the emergency vet. When possible, display such items behind glass doors, up where your cat can't reach it or in a room inaccessible to your pet. Consider using removable adhesive to fix precious items to table surfaces, making it difficult for them to be swatted to the floor.

2. Holiday plants. Mistletoe adds a merry touch to your holiday decorating, but make sure you hang it where your cat can't reach. Mistletoe, holly, poinsettias and pine boughs can be harmful or fatal to your cat if ingested. Mistletoe in particular, especially the needles, is highly toxic to cats, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association

No plant is safe if it has been treated with chemicals, says Elaine Wexler-Mitchell, DVM, in her book *Ask the Vet About Cats*. Stash potted plants out of reach, keep pine needles cleaned up off the floor and watch your cat for signs of illness. Common signs of poisoning are vomiting, stumbling, muscle tremors, depression and seizures, Wexler-Mitchell says. If you see any of these signs, take your cat to the vet immediately.