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'Tis the season for trimming the tree, giving presents and serving up big dinners – but, if you're a cat owner, don't skip these safety tips this Christmas.

Written by [Caitlin Ultimo](#) ✓



Holiday food and décor can be dangerous for cats. *pyszata/istock/Thinkstock*

Christmas is a time for celebrating with family and friends – and if you're like me, you consider your pet one of your nearest and dearest! After all, who else is always there for you day in and day out? Cats deserve to eat, drink and be merry this season, too, right? Well, maybe not like you think. While a little festive cheer may seem harmless, truth be told, a few of our holiday traditions can cause more harm than good.



CAITLIN ULTIMO
2 months ago

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Kathleen Furth, DVM, associate veterinarian at [Schoolhouse Animal Hospital](#) in New Jersey and Ann Hohenhaus, DVM, DACVIM, staff doctor at [The Animal Medical Center-NYC](#), contributed to this list of five cat-proofing tips to keep your festive feline safe and happy this holiday.

1. **Party food:** "At Christmas we have the same food hazards as at most gatherings, but there is usually an excess of sweets and candy," Furth says. Desserts contain high levels of sugar, caffeine and oftentimes chocolate, which cannot only cause vomiting and diarrhea but also an accelerated

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heart rate. Other foods to avoid include: dairy products, alcohol, caffeinated drinks and fat trimmings.

2. **A safe place:** With party guests coming and going, it may be a good idea to keep your cat in a closed off area of the house to prevent any accidental escapees. And while some cats may enjoy company, that doesn't mean that everyone you invite will be familiar with cats — and that can lead to potential accidents. Hohenhaus encountered a situation where a guest accidentally stepped on a cat and broke all the bones in the cat's foot, which then required a cast. Now, that's not cheerful for anyone! If you decide to keep your cat contained to a cat-friendly area, be sure to make it fit to your feline's liking. Include her scratching station and bed if she uses one. Also, make a stop at the pet store during your holiday shopping and pick up a few festive toys and treats to keep her entertained while people are over. A ball that's too big to swallow or a catnip stuffed toy will keep her busy. Try to take a few minutes here and there to play and interact with her throughout the night to make sure she's not only OK, but also having fun!
3. **The tree:** "We have to be careful about electrical cords and Christmas tree ornaments for some animals that like to chew on these things," Furth says. Be sure to fasten decorations securely to the tree and try to keep the tree in an area that's as cat-free as possible. Additionally, Furth warns, "The preservatives that are put in the water for live trees can be toxic, so we need to keep our pets out of the tree water." Poinsettias and many kinds of lilies are toxic to cats. If you'd like to include a floral holiday centerpiece, consider silk varieties.
4. **Candles:** Real candles may not only be knocked over by your cat, but can also burn her if she comes in contact with the flame. Try sticking with flameless candles, which are easy to find in stores and order online and come in a variety of sizes and colors. If you do decide to use real candles, just be sure to not leave the room unattended.
5. **Tinsel and ribbon:** "Cats are very susceptible to string foreign bodies — so be careful of tinsel garland and ribbon on packages," Furth says. What's the big deal about string? "Cats love to play with ribbon, tinsel, string and really anything long and thin," Hohenhaus says, "but when they accidentally swallow it, the strands can bunch up in their intestines and cause severe vomiting and internal cuts." That being said, skipping tinsel and ribbon when wrapping and decorating may be the safest choice for your cat. It can be fun for her, though, to open her own gifts, so simply wrap them loosely with paper and a little tape.

Keeping your cat safe using these safety tips will keep your cat happy this holiday season. Shower her with extra cuddles and nuzzles — I'm sure those are the top two things on her Christmas list!

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