

Toy Safety



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consumer *brief*

At each stage of development, children face new challenges and potential risks. Being aware of the dangers associated with toys at different stages of development can help you protect your child from injury.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. That soft, cuddly stuffed bear could present a choking hazard to your child if the eyes or nose come loose. Balloons, standard fare for any birthday party, can pop and become lodged in your child's throat.

- Never give latex balloons to children younger than eight (8) years of age.
- Balls and blocks should not be smaller than 1 3/4" in diameter.
- Make sure small parts of larger toys, such as wheels on toy cars, are secure and cannot break off.

Remember that age labels on toys do not refer to your child's cognitive abilities. They are a warning that the toy may present a choking threat or some other danger to your child.

BEFORE BUYING:

- Avoid toys that have objects that can be shot or propelled.
- Avoid toys that make loud noises, like cap guns, because they can damage a child's hearing.
- Make sure strings and ribbons are no longer than six inches to prevent strangulation; and
- Avoid toys with sharp points or edges.

AFTER BUYING:

- Spot check toys regularly for minor damage and urge your children to let you know when the toys need repair.
- Throw away all toy packaging, such as plastic, cellophane and styrofoam.
- Make sure batteries in toys are properly installed and never allow your child to sleep with a battery-operated toy.
- Encourage your children to put all of their toys away so that the toys do not become tripping hazards; and
- Teach your child to use every toy properly.

Toys such as bicycles, scooters, skateboards and in-line skates are safer when children wear protective gear. In New Jersey, anyone under 17 years of age must wear a properly fitted and fastened helmet while operating a bicycle, roller skates or skateboard, except where this requirement has been made exempt by municipal ordinance. If you plan to give any of these toys as gifts, make them safer by also giving a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads or wrist guards.

Continued



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Alert! Lead is a poisonous metal sometimes found in paint, toys, crafts, candy, tableware and certain medicines imported from other countries. Many toys have been recalled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission because of lead content.

KEEP THE LEAD OUT

All children are exposed to lead and have some lead in their bodies. Since there is no "safe level" of lead, the goal is to keep exposure as low as possible. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently published answers to the key question of how children get exposed:

- Children get lead-contaminated dust or dirt on their hands and then put their hands in their mouths; or they suck or chew on lead-painted or lead-containing objects. These behaviors are a normal part of development between 6 months and 3 years, so a child's age should be considered when determining who is at highest risk.
- Serious exposure results from swallowing an object that has high amounts of lead, such as jewelry that contains lead, a small lead weight or a fishing sinker. If swallowed, medical attention is required immediately.
- If a toy has been recalled because it contains lead, return it as instructed. Children who played with such toys that are cracked or have peeling paint are most at risk.

THE DANGERS OF LEAD

Lead exposure produces few physical symptoms, but even at low levels it may change brain development to cause lower IQ scores and behavioral problems. At higher blood levels, symptoms may include abdominal pain, constipation, loss of appetite, agitation, lethargy and seizures.



TOY SAFETY ADVICE

- Identify whether products in your home have been recalled by checking the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at www.cpsc.gov for a list of recalled toys.

IF YOU DO HAVE A RECALLED TOY IN YOUR HOME:

- Take it out of your child's hands immediately.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the recall; do not just throw out the product.
- Clean other toys that were near the recalled product.

Be an Informed Consumer...
We can Help!

DIVISION OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

973-504-6200 ■ 800-242-5846 (toll free within New Jersey)

E-Mail: AskConsumerAffairs@lps.state.nj.us

website: www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov

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