

Mat Release

Toy Safety: Put These Tips On Your List

Although family budgets may be a bit tighter these days than in the past, toys will always be on family shopping lists. Children, the primary target audience of toy advertising, certainly wield their share of influence about which toys will be purchased. But parents must consider which ones are actually appropriate.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), safety should be a priority when choosing toys.

“While most toy-related injuries are minor, some can be severe or even fatal,” says Gary Smith, M.D., FAAP, member of the AAP Committee on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention.

Small or loose parts on toys can choke small children. Toy guns can shoot out flying objects that may cause eye injuries, and others emit loud, snapping noises that can damage hearing. Riding toys may transport children into streets, swimming pools, or ponds. Beyond these common dangers, children may be shocked by electric toys, poisoned by toxic toys, or bruised or suffocated by toy chests. “Talk about taking the fun out of things,” says Dr. Smith.

The AAP offers the following safety tips for toy shopping:

- Read warning labels to see whether the toy is age-appropriate and whether adult supervision is

advised. Be sure to show children how to use the toy properly.

- Children under age 3 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games and balls with a diameter of one and three-quarters of an inch or less.
- Avoid toys that shoot small objects into the air or make loud or shrill noises.
- Look for sturdy construction.
- Watch out for sharp points or edges.
- Avoid toxic materials; look for paint sets, crayons, etc. that are marked nontoxic, and know that small batteries can be a choking or swallowing hazard.
- Don’t give hobby kits and chemistry sets to kids under 12.
- Children under 8 years old should not play with latex balloons, as they are a choking hazard.
- Make sure electric toys are UL approved.
- Be careful when buying crib toys; strings or wires should be kept short.
- Store toys in a safe container. Toy chests with lids should have locking supports and safe hinges, as well as ventilation holes.

For more information, see the AAP brochure, “Toy Safety,” at www.medem.com