

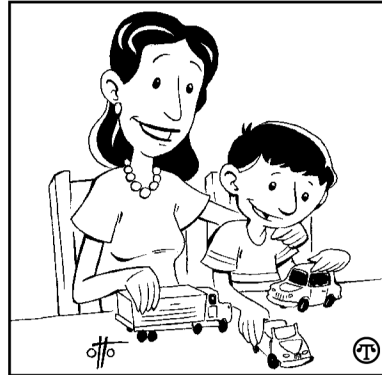
The Best Toys For Children Are Safe: Guidelines For Parents

(NAPS)—All children love to receive toys and games. However, something as innocent as a doll may become dangerous if your child pulls off an eye, gets tangled in a necklace, or gets cut on a sharp edge. To make sure the toys your children play with don't cause injuries, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) offers these guidelines.

“When buying a toy for your child, read the warning labels and look for age recommendations,” said Kathleen Clem, MD, of ACEP. “Choose toys that suit your child's age, abilities and interests, and keep toys designed for older children out of the hands of younger brothers and sisters.”

Here are some additional tips for purchasing toys for small children:

- Don't buy toys that pose choking hazards, especially those that are smaller than your child's mouth. These include balloons, marbles, small balls and toys with small removable parts. Make sure that all the parts of a toy, including eyes, noses and ears on stuffed toys or dolls, are secured tightly.
- Don't buy toys with long strings or cords, which can cause strangulation. Remove crib mobiles as soon as your child can push up on his hands and knees.
- Never let children play with uninflated or broken balloons, which can cause suffocation.
- Don't buy toys with sharp edges and points.
- Avoid toys that shoot small objects or include parts that fly off, which can cause serious cuts and injure eyes in particular.
- If your child has a toy box, make sure the lid will stay open in any position and not fall unexpectedly. It also should have ventilation holes to prevent suffocation if your child gets trapped inside.
- Don't buy toys made with toxic materials (e.g., toys painted with lead paint, batteries); when you buy crayons and paint sets, make sure they are labeled nontoxic.



More than 152,000 toy-related accidents occur each year. Help prevent these injuries by playing along with your child to decide whether a new toy poses a hazard.

- When buying riding toys or sports equipment (e.g., bicycles, scooters, skateboards), make sure your child wears appropriate protective gear (e.g., helmets, kneepads) and has the needed skills.
- Always throw away plastic packaging, which could lead to suffocation.
- Check all toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards, and make sure “hand-me-down” toys are safe for your child.

“Remember there is no substitute for proper supervision,” added Dr. Clem. “Children under age 3 tend to put everything in their mouths. They love to pull, throw, and twist toys, so look for toys that are well-made and can withstand impact. Parents also should pay attention to toys that have been recalled, because despite public warnings and toys being taken off shelves, many are still in people's homes.”

In 1999, more than 152,000 people—nearly half of whom were children under age 5—were treated in hospital emergency departments for toy-related injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. For a complete list of recalled toys, visit www.cpsc.gov. For more health and safety information, visit www.acep.org.