



AVOID COMMON HAZARDS

1. CHOKING

Choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), at least 41 children aspirated or choked to death from 2005-09 on balloons, toys, or toy parts.

Bigger is better: Do not buy small toys or toys with small parts for children under 3. If a toy or part of a toy can pass through a toilet paper tube, don't buy it for a child under 3, or any child who still puts things in his/her mouth.

Read and heed warning labels: Toys with small parts intended for children between 3 and 6 are required by law to include an explicit choke hazard warning.

Never give young children small balls or balloons: Small balls, balloons and pieces of broken balloons are particularly dangerous, as they can completely block a child's airway. Balls for children under 6 years old must be more than 1.75 inches in diameter. Never give latex balls to children younger than 8 years old.

2. MAGNETIC TOYS WITH POWERFUL MAGNETS

New, powerful small magnets used in most magnetic building toys, toy darts, other toys, and magnetic jewelry can fall out of small toys and look like shiny candy. If a child swallows more than one magnet, the magnets can attract each other in the body (in the stomach and intestines) and cause life-threatening complications. If a child swallows even one magnet, seek immediate medical attention.

3. WATCH OR "BUTTON" BATTERIES

Keep watch or "button" batteries away from children. If swallowed, the battery acid can cause fatal internal injuries.

4. NOISE

Children's ears are sensitive. If a toy seems too loud for your ears, it is probably too loud for a child. Take the batteries out of loud toys or cover the speakers with tape.

5. STRANGULATION HAZARDS

Mobiles: Keep mobiles out of the reach of children in cribs and remove them before the baby is five months old or can push him/herself up.

Cords: Remove knobs and beads from cords longer than one foot to prevent the cords from tangling into a dangerous loop.

Drawstrings: Clothing with drawstrings on the hood can get caught on fixed objects like playground equipment and pose a strangulation hazard.

6. LEAD AND OTHER TOXIC CHEMICALS

Some children's toys and cosmetics may contain lead or other toxic chemicals, including phthalates. While most lead and phthalates are being phased out of toys beginning in 2009, older toys may still contain them.

— over —

Toys with PVC Plastic: Avoid toys made of PVC plastic which could contain toxic phthalates posing developmental hazards; choose unpainted wooden or cloth toys instead.

Lead: The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and children's health groups have found high levels of lead paint on toys, as well as high levels of lead in vinyl lunchboxes and bibs, and in children's costume jewelry. All lead should be removed from a child's environment, especially lead jewelry and other toys that can be swallowed. To test jewelry for lead, use a home lead tester available at the hardware store, or simply throw costume jewelry made with such heavy metals away.

Other chemicals: Read the labels of play cosmetics and avoid products with xylene, toluene, or dibutyl phthalate.

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

Accessorize your kids for safety. Toys such as bicycles, scooters, skateboards and inline skates are safer when children wear protective gear. If you plan to give any of these toys as gifts, make them safer by also giving a helmet, knee pads, elbow pads and wrist guards.

Stay informed of recalls. The CPSC recalls numerous toys and children's products each year. Check www.recalls.gov for an archive of old recalls and to sign up to receive email alerts of new recalls.

Source: California Public Interest Research Group