

Constant Vigilance

Parents Must Ensure Toys are Safe for Kids

New toys attract kids because they are bright, colorful, and they make fun noises. The best toys captivate children and provide years of enjoyment.

But parents must be vigilant about choosing toys for their kids.



Danny Luna,
Injury Prevention Coordinator,
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Long Beach

"Read and follow the warning labels and be cautious with toys that have magnets or use batteries. Both can cause fatal injuries if they are swallowed."

"The first thing to consider when selecting a new toy is to ensure that it is age-appropriate," says Danny Luna, injury prevention coordinator, MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach. "Every toy's packaging uses age labeling which provides guidance for choosing proper toys for children based on their age, such as age 2+ or age 5+." Luna says. "Lots of toys have parts that can break apart, have sharp edges, or use button batteries that can be swallowed easily."

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) tests the safety of toys and the CPSC logo will certify the products' safety, Luna explains. Other agencies test pool safety, lead content, and electric safety for specific types of toys.

"Parents should always send in the registration card that comes with the toy, because that allows companies to contact the purchaser if there is a recall," says Luna. "Watch for toy recalls and quickly remove recalled toys."

In addition, Luna says, "Read and follow the warning labels and be cautious with toys that have magnets or use batteries. Both can cause fatal injuries if they are swallowed."

For safe play and ease of mind for parents, here are some of Luna's recommendations, and warnings from the CPSC.

- Keep Strings, cords, necklaces and ribbons away from small children as they can cause strangulation.
- Avoid giving toys made for older children to infants and toddlers under 3-years-old.
- Never allow children under 8-years-old to play with uninflated or broken balloons, because of the choking danger.
- Avoid marbles, balls and games that have balls with a diameter of 1.75 inches or less, since these pose a choking hazard to young kids.
- Look for toys that are well-made, with parts that are unable to be ripped or snapped off, such as eyes and buttons.
- Avoid toys that are constructed with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.
- Ensure art materials like crayons and paint sets are labeled non-toxic.
- Teach older children to keep their toys away from their younger brothers and sisters.

- If a toy gun is purchased, be sure the tip of the barrel is brightly colored so that it cannot be mistaken for a real gun.
- Encourage children to keep toys out of their mouth.
- Teach children to put away toys when they're finished playing, so that they don't trip over or fall on them.
- Check toys regularly for small parts, breakage and potential hazards, including chipped or peeling paint.
- Toys may contain sources of lead and can be poisonous if swallowed. Metal jewelry and peeled paint on toys are common causes of lead poisoning and should be thrown away.
- Always stay up to date with any recalls. Parents can visit www.cpsc.gov/recalls to view an up to date recall list.

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