

TOY SAFETY

Toy selection is an adult responsibility that should not be taken for granted. There is an assumption that all toys on the market are safe. Due to the tremendous number of toy manufacturers, toy products and imported toys, this assumption is not realistic. Parents and caregivers must carefully consider each toy before giving it to children. The age guidelines appearing on toy packaging should be followed. These guidelines refer to safety, not a child's intelligence.



GENERAL TIPS FOR TOYS

- Choose age-appropriate toys. The manufacturer's guidelines on the box are just that — guidelines. Take into consideration your child's stage of development and behavioral characteristics when choosing toys.
- Choose durable and washable toys.
- Toy boxes should have lightweight lids that are easily opened from the inside. For extra safety, there should be ventilation holes in the box. The lid should have a locking mechanism that holds it open and prevents it from falling on a child's head or fingers. Make sure the hinges are "pinch-proof."
- Find a website like safekids.org that lists recalls for children's toys and equipment. These sites will give the reason for the recall and how to get repair or refund information.
- Be cautious of homemade toys and toys purchased from craft shows. Be sure they are painted with non-toxic paint and follow the same safety guidelines as manufactured toys.
- Balloons are considered to be one of the most dangerous toys in the United States. Keep them away from young children and supervise older children during use.

INFANT TOYS

- The biggest concern for infant play materials is choking. Check toys for small pieces that may break off.
- Check toys for rough or sharp edges.
- Immediately discard any plastic packaging from a new toy.
- Keep babies away from their older sibling's toys if they contain small parts.

TODDLER TOYS

- Toys should hold a child's weight.
- Toys should be shatterproof.
- Toys with long strings or cords can cause strangulation.
- Supervise toddlers using riding toys outside.
- Avoid toys with small openings that could catch or pinch little fingers.
- Be sure battery-operated toys have the batteries well-secured, and any screws are counter-sunk and tight. Be especially cautious with books and toys that use coin lithium batteries.

PRESCHOOL TOYS

- Avoid toys that shoot "projectiles." If you choose to use these toys, be sure the projectiles are made of soft materials with blunt tips.
- Electric toys should have the "Underwriters Approval" on the cord. Be sure your child knows the proper techniques and safety precautions before allowing them to use these toys.
- Develop a family policy on "weapon" toys. If you decide to allow these toys, teach children not to point them at people or use them to hurt people.
- It is important for children to develop cutting skills, but remember that scissors are not toys and should be supervised when used.
- Be sure all art materials — markers, crayons and paint — are non-toxic and approved for use by children.
- Provide areas for older children to use when they play with toys not appropriate for younger siblings.

CARING FOR TOYS

- Examine toys periodically for broken pieces, sharp edges or other damage.
- Teach children to put away toys when finished playing.
- Store outdoor toys inside after use.
- Many toys require adults to teach children about safe usage. For instance, scooters, bikes, trikes and other wheeled toys should only be used if the rider is wearing a safety helmet.

Toys and play equipment provide invaluable learning experiences for children. With proper selection, care and supervision, adults can give children safe play experiences.

For more information, contact the Family Life Educators at 605-322-3660 or familylifeeducators@avera.org.

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