



Toy Safety

At each stage of development, children face new challenges and different risks. By being aware of the kinds of dangers associated with toys at different stages of development, you can better protect children while ensuring safe enjoyment of their toys. At least a quarter of a million children are treated for injuries in Canadian hospitals every year and tragically, about a thousand die from their injuries — more than any other cause.

Babies learn by putting things into their mouths and are at a high risk for choking on toys. Many reports of choking involve infants or toddlers who were playing with rattles and squeeze toys. Marbles and small balls are also a hazard. Parental supervision is key. Toys meant for older children, especially those with small parts, should be kept away from small children.

When a baby is crawling or just learning to walk, toy boxes and toy chests can be dangerous traps and heavy lids can slam shut on small children. Well supported lids with sturdy hinges and plenty of holes for ventilation can eliminate such risks.

Tricycles and riding toys are hazardous for toddlers since their coordination is not adequately developed and injuries are common when using these toys. Choose age appropriate toys and make sure children ride in safe places.

Projectile toys and toys with parts that fly appeal to school-aged children but can cause a variety of injuries, especially eye injuries. Supervise play with this type of toy and teach children to never aim projectiles at anyone.

Balloons are great fun, but they pose the greatest choking hazard for children of all ages. Always blow up balloons for children and never allow them to chew on uninflated balloons or broken pieces.



An Ounce of Prevention...

Before buying children's toys:

- use the recommended age labelling as a guide and buy only toys suitable for the child's age group
- avoid toys with sharp points or edges
- check rigid eyes and noses on soft toys and make sure that they cannot be pulled off
- make sure small parts of larger toys, such as wheels on toy cars, are secure and cannot break off.

After buying children's toys:

- look for safety messages on toy packaging and follow all instructions
- throw away or recycle all toy packaging, such as plastic, cellophane and styrofoam
- teach your child to use each toy appropriately
- make sure that batteries in toys are properly installed
- do not allow a child to sleep with a battery-operated toy
- supervise children playing with balloons and throw away pieces of broken balloons
- remove toys and mobiles strung across cribs and playpens when baby begins to push up with his/her hands and knees
- teach children to put their toys away
- inspect toys regularly
- throw away broken toys that cannot be fixed.

No matter how much safety is built into a toy, supervision, proper use and maintenance of toys are adult responsibilities. For information and pamphlets, contact the Information and Education Program, Consumer Safety Division, Product Safety, at (613) 952-1014. Health Canada Product Safety inspectors investigate consumer complaints about toys and laboratory specialists test toys to ensure that they are safe. If you have a concern, call your Health Canada district or regional offices of Product Safety or visit our web site at www.hc-sc.gc.ca.