

Toy Safety

Many toys are made with safety in mind, but no toy is totally safe. Toys that break or are misused can become dangerous. These tips will help you choose and maintain safe toys. Share them with your child's caregivers and grandparents so that the gifts they give and their homes are safer for your child, too.

Choose the right toys

Toys are age-graded for safety. Age-grades are guidelines that reflect the toy's safety based on:

- Any choking or safety risks
- The physical skills a child needs to play with the toy
- How well a child can understand how to use the toy
- The interests, needs and abilities at different stages of a child's development

With this in mind:

- Choose toys that match your child's age and skills.
- When buying used toys, avoid old wooden toys with chipped paint. The paint may contain lead.
- Read labels. Buy things that can be washed and that are flame-retardant or resistant.
- Choose paints, crayons and markers that say "non-toxic."
- Buy the safety gear that goes with the item, such as a helmet with a bike.

Watch for toy dangers

- **Sharp edges and sharp points.** Toys for older children and broken toys may have sharp points or edges that can hurt a small child. Avoid toys made from thin plastic that



can break easily. Stuffed toys may have wires inside that will stick out if the toy comes apart. Avoid giving toys with metal parts to toddlers and babies.

- **Small toys and toys with small parts.** To prevent choking, make sure that toys and parts are larger than your child's mouth if your child is 3 or younger. Check stuffed animals for eyes, noses and parts that can come off. Put small toys and toys with small parts out of reach when young ones are around. Soft baby toys should be large enough that they can't be swallowed even when they are squashed down.

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- **Loud noises.** Toys that make shrill or loud noise, such as toy cap guns, can damage your child's hearing. Read warning labels for how to use them safely. Try toys in the store to check how loud they are.
- **Cords and strings.** Toys with long cords or strings can be harmful for babies and very young children. They can get wrapped around a child's neck. Never hang toys with strings, cords or ribbons in cribs or playpens. Remove crib gyms when the child can pull up on hands and knees.
- **Toys that fly or shoot objects.** These can badly injure the eyes. Avoid toys that can fire things not made for use in the toy, such as pencils or nails. Arrows used by children should have soft tips made out of cork or rubber.
- **Electric toys.** Buy only toys that say "UL Approved" (Underwriters Laboratories). Toys that heat up are all right for children older than 8 years when used with an adult. Avoid fixing or making electric toys yourself.
- **Toys with magnets.** If magnets come off and your child swallows two or more of them, they can stick together inside your child's body. This can cause injury or death. Young children should not play with toys with magnets. If older children play with toys with magnets, warn them not to put any magnets in their mouth.

Remember that the best way to protect your children is to watch them while they play.

Keeping toys safe

- **Store toys in a safe place.** Put all toys away and off the floor when they're not being used. If you have a toy chest, it should have air holes and be easy to open from the inside. Check that the lid has a support that will hold the lid open in any position. You may want a lid that comes off completely. Better yet, use baskets or boxes without lids to store toys.
- **Check toys often for damage.** Watch for splinters or sharp edges on wooden toys. Sand them when needed. If you repaint toys, use new paint; old paint may contain lead. Check outdoor toys for rust. If a toy cannot be fixed, throw it away. Check toys with magnets to make sure no magnets are loose or missing.
- **Throw away plastic wrap and other packaging right away.**
- **Read toy instructions and explain them to your child.** Keep the instructions.

To Learn More

- **Toy recalls: Contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission for information on recalled toys, to sign up for e-mail notices about recalled toys or to report an unsafe toy: www.cpsc.gov or 800-638-2772**
- **www.seattlechildrens.org**
- **Seattle Children's Resource Line 206-987-2500 or 866-987-2500**
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- **Your child's healthcare provider**

Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call Marketing Communications at 206-987-5205 or 206-987-2280 (TTY).

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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