

Tips for Choosing Safe Toys

The right toy can help build imagination and coordination, but the wrong toy can do more harm than good.

Prevent Blindness America reports that in 2003, there were more than 10,000 eye injuries to children 14 and younger related to toys and play activities. Further, 90% of these injuries were preventable.

While many toy makers follow mandatory and voluntary safety guidelines for their products, some do not. The challenge is to find a toy your child will love and one that you know is safe.

How do I select a safe toy?

- > Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off. Slingshots and even water guns are dangerous because they invite children to target other kids. BB guns should not even be considered toys.
- > Inspect toys for solidness. Your child's toys should be durable with no sharp edges or points. The toys should also withstand impact.
- > Look for the letters "ASTM." This means the product meets the national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).

What should I consider when buying toys for 2 and 4-year-olds?

- > Don't give toys with small parts to young children. Young kids tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking.
- > Read directions carefully and follow suggested age levels. Ask yourself if the toy is right for your child's ability and age.
- > Remember that age labeling is for ability levels and for the safety of your child.

How can I keep my child safe after buying a toy?

- > Explain how to use the toy.
- > Repair or throw away damaged toys.
- > Keep toys meant for older children away from younger ones.
- > Don't let your child misuse toys in ways that could be dangerous.

Are there other things I can do to help prevent eye injuries?

- > Store or give away toys that your child has outgrown.

Keep your child away from unsafe areas in the home. Make sure your child plays in an open area and, if necessary, under your supervision. Make a list of safety rules and share them with your child. If your child is playing with friends, tell everyone your safety rules.



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