

HOLIDAY TOY SAFETY

With the holiday season in full swing, many of us are on the search for that perfect gift, but remember, safety should always be the number one priority.

Toys are a fun and important part of your infant or toddler's development, but each year, many kids are treated in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries. Here are a few toy safety tips to keep in mind:

Check the materials

- Read labels. Most toys should have a recommended age range, so follow it. All toys should be flame retardant or flame resistant, and dolls and other stuffed toys should be washable and made of hygienic materials.
- Check hand-me-downs. Older toys might have sentimental value, but make sure that they are both safe and age-appropriate. Toys made before 1978 may have lead paint.
- Check for choking hazards. Throw away the wrapping and packaging. Beware of small magnets and batteries, which are easily swallowed. Choking is a particular risk for children under 3.

Check the size, shape and function

- Give toys the toilet paper roll test. If a toy could fit inside a toilet paper

roll, then it's a choking hazard, and too small for an infant or toddler.

- Don't allow toys with strings or cords longer than 12 inches. These are also choking hazards and shouldn't be used or hung in cribs or playpens.
- No toys with sharp points or edges, removable parts or loud noises. Excessive noise can be harmful to young ears.

Your role as a parent

- Supervise your children as they play. Teach your children how to use their toys the right way – this includes putting toys away when playtime is over, which removes tripping hazards.
- Conduct regular "toy maintenance." Look for broken parts or other potential hazards. Check outdoor toys for rust or weak spots, and check wooden toys for splinters. Broken toys can expose dangerous points, edges or wires.
- Enlist the help of older siblings. Young children are curious and might want to play with toys that aren't age-appropriate, so teach older children to keep their own toys out of reach from their younger siblings.