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# Toy Safety Tips

Toy makers must make sure that they produce safe toys that meet the safety standards set by Health Canada. Sometimes unsafe toys do make their way onto store shelves and into homes. You may also have older toys that are no longer safe, or the way the toys are being used may expose children to hazards.

**Here are some tips to help you choose and use toys safely.**



## ★ When Buying Toys – New or Used

- Read and follow the age label, warnings, safety messages and assembly instructions.
- Look for sturdy, well-made toys.
- Look for toys that come with contact information for the manufacturer or importer.
- Purchase age appropriate toys. Toys for older children may contain small parts or present other hazards that make them unsafe for younger children.

**Note:** Check homemade and artisan toys for all the same hazards listed on this sheet.

## ★ Choking Hazards

- Young children, especially those under three years of age, frequently mouth objects. Small toys, balls or loose or broken toy parts are choking hazards. **Keep them out of reach.**
- Know how your child plays. Small toys can be dangerous for older children if they still tend to put non-food items in their mouths.
- Check squeeze toys to make sure that small squeakers or reeds are not removable.
- Check toy cars and trucks to make sure that wheels, tires or other small parts are not loose or removable.
- Check stuffed and plush toys to make sure that the eyes, nose and other small items are firmly attached and cannot be pulled off.

## ★ Other Hazards

- Check that infant toys like rattles and teethingers are large enough that they will not get stuck in an infant's throat.
- Avoid toys with cords that are long enough to wrap around a child's neck, especially stretchy or sticky cords. The cords could strangle a child.
- Check that the toy does not have sharp points or edges. These could cut a child.

## ★ After Buying Toys

- Always supervise children and teach them how to use toys safely.
- Promptly remove and discard all toy packaging like plastic bags, plastic wrap, foam, staples and ties. A child can suffocate or choke on these items.
- Keep all toys, especially plush and soft toys, away from heat sources like stoves, fireplaces and heaters. The toys could catch fire and burn a child.
- Check toys often for hazards like loose parts, broken pieces or sharp edges, and repair or discard any weak or damaged toys.
- Make sure that toys attached to child care items such as cribs, playpens and strollers are installed properly and check regularly that they are still securely attached.
- Remove mobiles and toy bars from the crib as soon as a baby begins to push up on hands and knees.

## ★ Toy Storage

- Store toys and games for older children separate from those for younger children.
- Use a toy box without a lid, or one with a lightweight lid that will not fall on a child.
- Not all storage boxes are good for toys, if the box has a lid remove it or check to make sure:
  - ▶ the box has air holes for breathing, in case a child climbs inside;
  - ▶ the lid has a hinge that will hold it open in any position and it will stay open even if a child pushes down on it; and
  - ▶ there is no latch or other device that could lock the lid and trap a child inside.



- Children should not have access to airtight storage bins or old trunks with lids. If a child climbs into one, they could suffocate.

## ★ Toys with Magnets

- Swallowed magnets can attract one another across intestines and cause serious injury or death. Small powerful magnets used in toys, jewellery and other household items may pose a hazard if the item containing the magnet, or the magnet itself, is small enough to be swallowed.
- Children have ingested small magnets thinking they were candy.
- Teach children of **all ages** that small magnets, and small items containing magnets, should never be placed in their mouth.
- Keep toys with small magnets out of the reach of children of any age if they still tend to put non-food items in their mouth.
- Check for small magnets that may have detached from magnetic toys and immediately remove them from the play area.
- Seek immediate medical care for any child who has swallowed, or is suspected of having swallowed, one or more magnets.

## ★ Ride-on Toys

- Choose a ride-on toy that suits a child's age, size and abilities.
- Check that the ride-on toy will not tip when a child is using it. Check that it is stable when weight is placed on any riding point.
- Use the ride-on toy in safe areas that are far away from stairs, traffic, swimming pools and other hazards.
- Be aware that a child on a wheeled ride-on toy can move very quickly. Look for hazards like furniture, lamps, cords, decorations or appliances that could be knocked over or pulled down, and remove the hazards before play begins.
- Baby walkers are banned in Canada because they are unsafe. Do not use these products.

## ★ Toys with Batteries

- Only adults should install batteries. Improper installation or mixing different battery types can cause batteries to leak or overheat, which can result in injury.
- Only adults should charge batteries. Battery chargers and adapters can pose thermal burn hazards to children.
- Check that young children cannot open a toy's battery compartment.
- Do not allow a child to take a battery-operated toy to bed. Burns and other injuries could result from batteries leaking or overheating.
- Call a doctor or a poison control centre immediately if a child swallows a battery. Batteries can be poisonous.

## ★ Latex Balloons

- Latex balloons have caused a number of deaths. A balloon can be inhaled and can block a child's airway.
- Always keep uninflated latex balloons, or broken balloon pieces, out of the reach of children; immediately discard broken balloon pieces.
- Latex balloons are best used for decoration, not for play.

## ★ Toys with Sound

- Playing too long and too often with very loud toys can harm a child's hearing.
- If you have to yell to be heard above the sound of a toy, then it is likely too loud for a child and should not be used.
- Look for toys that have volume control features, so that the sound can be kept low or turned off.

## ★ Jewellery

- Never allow a child to suck or chew on metal jewellery. It may contain lead, and ingesting even small amounts of lead can be harmful to a child's health and development.
- Never place a necklace, string, ribbon or chain around the neck of a child under three years of age. The jewellery could strangle a child and small attachments could be a choking hazard.

## More on Making Play Safe

- Keep small household items like small or broken crayons, coins, paper clips, pen caps, jewellery, hair clips, screws, buttons, keys, candy and gum out of the reach of children under three years of age. These items are common causes of choking.
- Decorations and collectibles can have small loose parts that could choke, or sharp parts that could cut. Even though these items can be attractive to children, they likely do not meet toy safety standards. Keep them out of children's reach.
- Purchase age appropriate party favours.
- Do not use party favours, like whistles and blowers, if they have loose parts like small reeds. These can be inhaled, even by older children.

Health Canada investigates safety-related consumer complaints. If you would like more information, or if you think you have a toy that could be dangerous, contact Consumer Product Safety, Health Canada:

► **1-866-662-0666** or **cps-spc@hc-sc.gc.ca**

Consumer Product Safety, Health Canada would like to invite you to subscribe to the electronic newsletter, *Consumer Product Safety News*. Subscribers receive updates when new information, consumer advisories and warnings, consumer product recalls, and consultation documents regarding consumer product safety are posted on the Health Canada Web site.

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