

The Medical Minute: New toy safety standards bring parents confidence

December 16 2009, By Susan Rzucidlo

The holiday season is here and for many kids that means one thing: toys. About half of all toy purchases in the United States occur between the Friday after Thanksgiving and Christmas.

While parents are on a mad-dash to scoop up the hottest [toys](#), safety should be at the top of their wish lists. Each year, an estimated 169,300 toy-related injuries in children ages 14 years and younger are treated in [hospital](#) emergency rooms across the United States. With the new federal toy safety standards passed by Congress and in place this year, parents can be reassured that the vast majority of toys on store shelves are safe.

Right now, parents and caregivers are in the middle of the country's busiest toy-buying season, and the new safety standards allow them to shop with more confidence than ever. However, it doesn't mean parents should throw caution to the wind. Shoppers should still make sure they are buying age-appropriate toys and following important toy safety guidelines. The [Consumer Product Safety](#) Commission should continue to monitor the marketplace to ensure that toys comply with these standards.

Safe Kids Dauphin County offers tips for making sure children's toys are safe during this [holiday season](#):

Make sure to buy age-appropriate toys. Before shopping for toys, consider the child's age, interest and skill level. A fun, but inappropriate toy for a particular child can be dangerous. All toys are clearly marked if

they have small parts; do not buy toys with small parts, or allow a child under age 3 to play with those kinds of toys belonging to an older sibling.

Identify dangerous small parts. To check if a toy's size may pose a choking hazard, use a small parts tester or a toilet tissue roll. Do not let small children play with anything that can fit into one of these cylinders.

Inspect toys to make sure they are in good repair. Do not let young children play with toys that have straps, cords or strings longer than seven inches, due to the risk of strangulation.

Actively supervise children. Caregivers should actively supervise children playing with any toy that has small parts, moving parts, electrical or battery power, cords, wheels or any other potentially risky component. Simply being in the same room as your child is not necessarily supervising. Active supervision means keeping the child in sight and in reach and paying undivided attention.

Practice proper storage. Teach children to put toys away after playing, to help prevent falls and unsupervised play, and make sure toys intended for younger children are stored separately from those for older children. Toy chests should be equipped or retrofitted with safety hinges that prevent the lid from closing on a child who is leaning over the open chest; if a chest does not have safety hinges, remove the lid.

To stay informed about harmful products in the marketplace, parents can go to www.recalls.gov/ and sign up for e-mail alerts on recalled children's products. It is too difficult to get your information piecemeal from TV or the newspaper, so if you get the e-mails sent to you each time a recall happens, you'll know right away which products to avoid.

Safe Kids Dauphin County reminds parents that most toys are safe, especially if you buy from a reputable retailer.

If secondhand toys are purchased, or received from friends or relatives, Safe Kids Dauphin County advises parents to visit www.cpsc.gov/ and make sure the toy hasn't been recalled for safety reasons. Used toys should also be in good condition with all original parts and packaging, if possible. If a new toy comes with a product registration card, mail it in right away so the manufacturer can contact you if the item is ever recalled.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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