

poison prevention press

How the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Keeps Children Safe

The CPSC wants parents to feel confident that the toys their children play with are safe. In recent years, they created a toy safety system to achieve this goal. This system:

- Requires testing of toys in laboratories around the world
- Enforces strict lead limits for toys
- Imposes strict toy standards
- Stops toys that violates standards at ports before they reach store shelves

You can sign up to receive recall updates by e-mail from the CPSC on their website, www.cpsc.gov.

Did you know that...

- During the past 5 years, CPSC has stopped more than 9.8 million units of 3,000 different toys that were in violation of U.S. safety standards.
- In fiscal year 2013, CPSC issued only 31 toy recalls, none involving lead. This is down from 172 recalls, 19 due to lead, in fiscal year 2008.

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Toy Safety

With the holiday season upon us, we are busy looking for toys and gifts for our friends and family. We should be aware that there could be hidden poison dangers for small children in some of these gifts.

Although some magnetic toys have been removed from the market, there are still a number of items available that can be dangerous if swallowed. A single magnet or magnetic toy can be a choking hazard to a young child. But if more than one magnet or magnetic toy is swallowed, the child is at risk for more severe problems. Magnets can attract to each other inside the body. In some instances, surgery is needed to remove the magnets and repair damage done to the intestines.

Many toys and household items are powered by small button-shaped batteries. There are also bulk packages of replacement batteries available that have as many as 30 tiny batteries on a single card! These batteries are small enough for a young child to swallow easily without anyone realizing until much later. If the battery becomes lodged in the throat, it can cause severe burns. If a parent suspects a child has swallowed a battery, an X-ray is needed right away. Batteries that are located in the stomach will be allowed to pass naturally. Batteries found in the throat will be removed right away.

We often hear about jewelry and arts and crafts products being recalled because they have been found to contain lead. Items manufactured in the U.S. must meet certain standards regarding safety. At times, items manufactured in other countries do not meet the same U.S. standards and they may make it into stores here in the U.S. Look for the ACMI Seal on arts and crafts products to be sure they are safe. Parents should also monitor lead recall lists found at www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/recalls. Products found on the list should be taken from the child right away. If a child has been exposed to a product on the list, parents should speak with the child's doctor about the possible exposure to lead.

There are several toys available that start out small, but when they are soaked in water, they grow in size. Some examples are Orbeez[®], Slippery Spheres[™], and Jelly BeadZ[®], to name a few. These water absorbing balls and toys can be a problem if a small child swallows them because they will absorb moisture from the stomach and intestine and may grow inside the body. If they grow large enough, they can block the intestine.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission is charged with making sure household products, including toys, are safe. As a result, all toys are labeled with the age of the child the toy is intended for. Parents should understand that many factors go into determining the age on a product. Even if a child has the ability to play with a certain toy, it still may not be appropriate because small parts are considered a choking hazard. As part of normal development, young children up to age 3 are likely to put things in their mouth. Sometimes this age extends to 4 or 5 years of age. Parents should use the package labels to help choose toys that are safe for their children. When there are older siblings in the home, special care must be taken so that younger children do not have access to toys meant for older children. More information about toy safety can be found at www.cpsc.gov.

If parents and caregivers suspect a child has swallowed a toy or battery, know that expert help is a phone call away by dialing 1-800-222-1222.

