

# Safety Fact Sheet

## Toys



### What is a Toy?

A toy is an object used in play, especially by children. Toys play a key role in the social, physical and intellectual development of children.

### How may a child be injured?

#### Burns

- Children may sustain burns from Bunsen burners included in some chemistry sets.

#### Choking

- Young children may choke on small pieces that break away from a toy. Stuffed toys may have detachable parts such as eyes, nose, polystyrene (bead) filling or jewellery which may choke small children if swallowed.
- Young children can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons.
- Young children can mistake erasers and refrigerator magnets, shaped like food, for real food. This can lead to a child choking.

#### Electric shock

- Children can receive an electric shock when flying a kite if it touches power lines.
- Children can receive an electric shock if toys are pushed into power points.

#### Cuts and bruises

- Children can sustain cuts or splinters on sharp edges and rough surfaces.
- Children can sustain cuts or crushed fingers when playing with toys which have gaps big enough to entrap fingers.

#### Drowning

- Flotation toys for children should not be relied upon to keep children afloat. Children can drown without adequate adult supervision.

#### Entrapment

- Children may become entrapped and suffer serious or fatal injuries if a basketball ring is attached to an unstable structure and collapses under the weight of a child holding onto the ring.
- Children's fingers may become trapped in toys with small gaps or holes.

#### Falls

- Children may sustain fractures, dislocations, sprains, cuts, bruising, head injuries when falling from ride-on toys such as bicycles, scooters, sit-on toys, pedal cars, etc.
- Children may sustain fractures, dislocations, sprains, cuts, bruising, head injuries, etc when falling from playground equipment and trampolines.

#### Poisoning

- Batteries from toys have the potential to poison young children if swallowed. 'Dead' batteries can also leak poisons or liquid that can damage skin or eyes.
- Children may be poisoned if the liquid in toys contains a harmful chemical substance and leaks out.

#### Eye and Ear Injuries

- Toys that make very loud noises can damage a child's hearing. Babies are more sensitive to loud noises than older children.
- High pressure water guns fired at close range can cause serious eye or ear injuries in children, as can other projectile toys.

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### Strangulation

- Young children may be strangled by string attached to a toy. The free length of string attached to toys should not be longer than 22 cm.
- Toys such as yo yo's or balls on the end of a stretchy piece of cord string can wrap around a child's neck and cause strangulation.
- Cot mobiles within the reach of a baby can lead to strangulation if a child becomes entangled.

### Struck by object

- Young children may be injured or even killed if struck by a heavy toy box lid while peering inside the toy box.
- Children may be injured when playing with bows and arrows or projectile guns, particularly those that can be adapted to fire objects such as pens, pins or ball bearings.

### Suffocation

- Young children may suffocate or choke on deflated or burst balloons.

### How common are these injuries?

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) provides thorough statistics on toy-related deaths and injuries for the calendar year 2004. In the United States of America there was an estimated 210,300 toy-related injuries treated in US hospital Emergency Departments; 35% of these were to children under five. Ride on toys (i.e. bicycle, tricycle, scooter) were linked to more injuries (71,100 or 34%) than any other type of toy (51,400 or 24% of these were associated with unpowered scooters).<sup>1</sup>

Due to varying data collection methods similar statistics are not available Australia wide. However the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit collected the following statistics for the State of Victoria. In 2004 and 2005 there were 1669 children, between the ages of 0-9, treated in Emergency Departments for toy related injuries. Ride on toys were also linked to more injuries than any other type of toy.<sup>2</sup>

### Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for toys?

The law, Fair Trading (General) Regulation 2002. Gazette No. 135, 30/8/02, states that all toys intended for children under 36 months sold in Australia must meet the requirements of the Australian Standard, AS 1647.2-1992, *Children's toys (safety requirements) - Part 2: Constructional requirements*, or AS/NZS ISO 8124.1:2002, *Safety of toys - Part 1: Safety aspects related to mechanical and physical properties*. From 1 July 2002 toys intended for children under 36 months must comply with AS/NZS ISO 8124.1:2002. Under both standards, during testing a toy must not release a small part which is an ingestion/inhalation hazard.

<sup>1</sup> United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2005, *Toy-Related Deaths and Injuries, Calendar Year 2004*, Washington, DC 20207. <http://www.cpsc.gov>

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, 2006.



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A small part is one which fits entirely into the small parts cylinder (roughly the size of a 35mm film canister) when tested in accordance with 5.2 (small parts test) of the Australian/New Zealand Standard *Safety of Toys* (AS/NZS ISO 8124.1:2002).

There are a number of other Australian Standards for different categories of toys. These can be viewed at the following address under the categories listed:

<http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/business/summarynswsafetyproductinformationlaws.pdf>



Balloon-Blowing Kits	p22
Bead Toys including “Bindeez” Bead Toys	p22
Disappearing Inks & Liquid Squirt/Spray Toys	p22
Expanding Water Novelties	p23
Flashing Dummies	p23
Flotation Toys & Swimming Aids	p23
Inflatable Toys & Novelties	p24
Knives – Certain Toy or Novelty	p24
Lead in Toys	p25
Liquid Filled Products	p25
Pop Dome Toys & Similar Products	p25
Projectile Toys	p26
Projectile Toys – Small Darts	p26
Underwater Toys & Games	p26
Yo Yo Type Balls	p27



### Remember:

- The Children’s Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you check for products that have been recalled ([www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au)) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.
- If an object can fit into a 35mm film canister it is capable of choking a child under the age of three. Check toys for small parts which can be easily put into the mouth, nose or ears.
- ‘Dead’ batteries in toys should always be thrown out as they can leak poisons or liquid that can damage skin or eyes. Batteries can also cause serious poisoning if swallowed.
- Check labels on toys for age recommendations, instructions for use and for information about whether the toy is non-toxic and non-flammable.
- Never purchase toys that are inappropriate for your child’s age and level of development. Warnings that a toy is not suitable for children under three mean there are small parts which could be swallowed. It is not an indication of intelligence or skill level.
- Ride-on toys should be suitable to the child’s age. They should be stable with good brakes that the rider can apply easily.
- Check toys regularly for sharp edges, rough surfaces or broken pieces as they can cause cuts and splinters.
- Be careful of toys that make loud noises as they can damage hearing, especially toys which are placed near the ear, such as toy phones and walkie talkies.



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- When buying tents, masks, helmets, etc, check for good ventilation/air space.
- When selecting toys, choose well-made and hard-wearing toys that can tolerate/adapt to rough play without falling apart. Choose washable, non-breakable toys for babies.
- Choose toys that have no gaps or holes which could entrap a child's fingers.
- Make sure paints, colours and glues are non-toxic. Look for labelling that states this.
- Always remove burst or uninflated balloons from the play areas of small children as they can cause choking.
- Never tie a rubber balloon onto the side of a cot or pram/stroller. Make sure strings attached to balloons are shorter than 22cm so they do not present a strangulation hazard.
- Toys filled with liquid should be thrown out immediately if they begin to leak.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you do not buy projectile toys for your child. If you decide to buy a projectile toy, only choose ones that have soft, one-piece darts or non-removable suction caps.
- When buying a toy box the Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you choose a toy box that complies with the Australian Standard.

This fact sheet is for educational purposes only.