



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5520

www.adph.org

Keep safety in mind when buying toys

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Kim Wilder
(334) 206-5569
Jamey Durham
(334) 206-5634

As Alabamians look for perfect toys, the Alabama Department of Public Health reminds them to shop with safety in mind. Although the majority of toys are safe, they can become dangerous if misused or if they fall into the hands of children who are too young to play with them.

Millions of toys have been recalled recently due to unsafe levels of lead. What kind of exposure to lead constitutes a health risk for a child? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics all children are exposed to lead and have some lead in their bodies. However, no “safe level” of lead exposure has been defined. Therefore, the goal is to keep the level of exposure as low as possible.

Children most often get lead into their bodies by getting lead-contaminated dust or dirt on their hands and then putting their hands in their mouths, or by directly sucking or chewing lead-painted or lead-containing objects. Because these types of mouthing behaviors are a normal part of development between the ages of 6 months and 3 years, a child’s age is an important factor when considering who is at highest risk for swallowing lead.

Recently, the Chinese government signed new agreements to conduct pre-export inspections to prevent lead painted toys from being exported to the U.S. A lead-specific recall list is available at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Web site at www.cpsc.gov. Other toy safety resources are available at the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site at www.aap.org or by calling (847) 434-4000.

Safety experts stress the need to select “age appropriate” toys to reduce the risk of choking, strangulation, and other potentially fatal hazards. Dianne Sims, director of the Children’s Health Division, Bureau of Family Health Services, suggests, “Include toys that help promote learning and growth in all areas of development.”

The leading causes of toy-related fatalities are choking and aspiration of toy parts. Toy manufacturers must design and manufacture their product to meet regulations so that hazardous products are not sold. If a product causes a safety risk to children, a recall can be issued. Consumers should be aware and informed of recalls.

Toy Safety Tips

* Before shopping for toys, consider the child’s age, interest and skill level.

- * Make sure the toy is sturdy and that no small parts (such as eyes, noses, buttons or other parts) can break off the toy.
- * When shopping, read labels and follow the age and safety information on the warning labels.
- * Keep toys with small parts away from children under age 3. They can choke on small toys and parts. Small, rounded and oval objects (like balls and marbles) can easily fit into a child's mouth. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age 3 cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- * Carefully read instructions for the assembly and use of toys.
- * Always remove and discard all packaging before giving it to a baby or small child. Remind caregivers, including grandparents, of play-related safety concerns.
- * Separate and store toys by age levels. Teach children to put toys away after playing. Safe storage prevents falls and other injuries.
- * Check old and new toys regularly for damages such as sharp edges or small parts. Make repairs immediately or throw away damaged toys.
- * For all children under 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- * Keep un-inflated balloons and broken balloon pieces away from children.
- * Crib toys with strings, cords and ribbons present a strangulation hazard.

The SafeKids Coalition offers these tips to find suitable toys for children by age:

0 to 1: Newborns to 1-year-olds explore with their hands, mouths and eyes, and enjoy toys they can touch or squeeze. Crib gyms, floor activity centers, activity quilts, squeaky toys, soft dolls or stuffed animals

1 to 3: One- to 3-year olds climb, jump, walk and throw and play rough-and-tumble games. Soft blocks, large blocks, push and pull toys, pounding and shaping toys, books

3 to 5: Three- to 5-year-olds like to experiment with imaginary situations and have toys that are close companions. Non-toxic art supplies, Pretend toys (play money, telephone), teddy bears or dolls, outdoor toys such as tricycle with a helmet

5 to 9: Five- to 9-year-olds like to be challenged with complex games that teach specific skills and concepts. Arts and crafts kits, puppets, jump ropes, non-toxic art supplies, miniature dolls and action figures

9 to 14: Nine- to 14-year-olds develop lifelong skills, hobbies and enjoy team sports. Handheld electronic games, board games, sports equipment, model kits, musical instruments

