

TOY SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

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At this special time of year, we are inundated with advertisements which draw us into the shopping malls to buy our children the hottest toys on the market. I was in a store the other day and actually witnessed parents carting their young son around a toy store with him checking everything off of his list as they went. If the parents hesitated, the youngster went into a screaming tantrum. Unfortunately, the toy that he wanted was probably unsafe for a child of his age. Although the parents were under a lot of pressure, they did what many people will not do, and that is to exercise good judgment as to the type of toys they select for their children. Certain toys are appropriate for certain aged children, and most of the time the ages on the boxes are accurate. What parents do not realize until it is too late, is that pieces of certain toys will become choking threats if those pieces are bitten off, wear off from use, or just break off because of poor design. Other parts of toys can strangle necks, pierce eyes and break bones. Some other toys can cause suffocation from covering airways, or even extensive house fires due to faulty and overheated wiring. We are not talking about being a grinch here, but we are talking about taking that extra step to assure that our young loved ones will not be injured nor suffer unnecessary debilitating injuries.

One of the hottest toys of the year is the old fashioned scooter. These items flooded the market so quickly that everyone had to have one for each of their children. Common sense dictates that the parents weigh the ability of their children to use such a toy. They seem harmless, but there have been an extraordinary number of emergency room visits from just this one item. Appropriate headgear and padding is absolutely essential, and mom and dad had better be careful if they take that little two wheeled special for a pre-holiday spin. Several brands of this toy have been recalled for concerns over safety, as the handles seem to collapse and cause the rider to fall. Although it may be easier to retrieve the items which are deemed to be dangerous, many of these items are already in use, or are neatly wrapped for holiday surprises. This particular toy is just one of many which have been identified by the Consumer Product Safety Commission for recall.

On December 12, 2000, the Consumer Product Safety Commission released its list of the "Dangerous Dozen" toys on the market. The web site to find that list is:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml01/01052.html>

The Consumer Product Safety Commission orders recalls on products when it is determined that they are dangerous to the population. It is critical that parents stay tuned in to these recalls which are usually announced on the news, but are also posted in stores where they are sold. Almost all manufacturers, through their retailers will refund the money for these recalled and returned items, or provide the consumer with an appropriate credit for store purchase.

When purchasing toys this season and beyond this season, it is necessary to recognize the construction of the toy as well as the appropriateness of the item for the recipient. If things start

falling off the toy, take it back or throw it away. If you think it is too dangerous a toy, it probably is, and it should be returned. Do not leave children unsupervised in situations where they can injure themselves by ingesting small pieces from toys, or suffocate from the discarded wrapping materials. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Have a safe holiday season.