

## **TOY INJURY**

More than 3 billion toys and games are sold annually in the United States. Although they are meant to provide joy and entertainment, toys are often linked to injuries. Children ages 4 and under are at especially high risk. While choking accounts for many of these deaths and injuries, children can also suffer from falls, strangulation, burns, drowning and poisoning while playing with toys.

Although the majority of toys are safe, they can become dangerous if misused or used by children who are too young for them. Appropriate selection and proper use of toys, combined with parental supervision, can greatly reduce the incidence and severity of such injuries.

### ***TOY-RELATED DEATHS AND INJURIES***

- In 2002, at least 13 children ages 14 and under died from toy-related injuries. More than half of these children were ages 4 and under.
- In 2002, an estimated 165,200 children ages 14 and under were treated in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries. Children ages 4 and under accounted for 34 percent of these injuries.
- The majority of toy-related injuries are minor. Approximately 97 percent of children seen in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries are treated and released.

### ***WHEN AND WHERE TOY-RELATED DEATHS AND INJURIES OCCUR***

- The leading cause of toy-related death is riding toys. Among children ages 14 and under, riding toys (including unpowered scooters) are associated with more injuries than any other toy group. In 2002, more than 30 percent of toy-related child deaths involved riding toys. That year, an estimated 71,500 children were treated in hospital emergency rooms for riding toy-related injuries.
- 75 percent of riding toy-related injuries is motor vehicle-related. Riding toy-related deaths can also occur when a child falls from a toy or rides a toy into a pool, pond or other body of water.
- In 2002, 54 percent of toy-related deaths were due to choking; 43 percent of these involved balloons. Other toy-related deaths were due to drowning, suffocation and motor vehicle crashes.
- Of all toy-related injuries, 47 percent are to the head and face area, which includes the head, face, eyes, mouth and ears.

### ***WHO IS AT RISK***

- Due to their natural desire to put everything in their mouths and the small size of their upper airways, children under age 3 are at greater risk than older children from choking on toys.
- Males account for more than 58 percent of all toy-related injuries.

### ***TOY INJURY PREVENTION LAWS AND REGULATIONS***

- The Federal Hazardous Substances Act bans any toy or children's article that consists of or contains any hazardous substance, including hazardous levels of lead, or that presents an electrical, mechanical or thermal hazard.
- The Child Safety Protection Act requires choking hazard warning labels on packaging for small balls, balloons, marbles, and certain toys and games containing small parts, when these items are intended for use by children ages 3 to 6. This act also bans any toy intended for use by children under age 3 that may pose a choking, aspiration or ingestion hazard.

- The Labeling of Hazardous Art Materials Act mandates the labeling of hazardous art materials as inappropriate for use by children.
- The toy industry has established voluntary toy safety standards under the Standard Consumer Safety Specification on Toy Safety (ASTM F963) to minimize the risk of injury from toys during normal intended use and reasonable foreseeable abuse.
- To distinguish them from real guns, toy guns must conform to marking requirements under the U.S. Department of Commerce “Marking of Toy Look-Alike and Imitation Firearms” regulation.

### ***HEALTH CARE COSTS***

- It is estimated that the total annual cost of toy-related injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms among children ages 4 and under is approximately \$385 million.

### ***PREVENTION TIPS***

- Use Mylar balloons instead of latex balloons. Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. If you must use latex balloons, store them out of reach of children, do not allow children to inflate them, and deflate and discard balloons and balloon pieces after use.
- When selecting toys, consider the child’s age, interests and skill level; look for quality design and construction; and follow age and safety recommendations on labels.
- Ensure that toys are used in a safe environment. Riding toys should not be used near stairs, traffic or swimming pools.
- Always supervise children at play. Play is even more valuable when adults become involved and interact with children rather than supervising from a distance.
- Teach children to put toys away safely after playing. Ensure that toys intended for younger children are stored separately from those for older children.
- Consider purchasing a small parts tester to determine whether small toys may present a choking hazard to children under age 3.
- Inspect old and new toys regularly for damage and potential hazards. Make any necessary repairs immediately or discard damaged toys out of children’s reach.
- Check the Web site of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)) regularly to obtain information on recent toy recalls. Return to manufacturers the warranty and product registration forms for new toy purchases to ensure that you will be notified of any recalls.
- Young children should never play with toys with strings, straps or cords longer than 7 inches, which can unintentionally strangle them.
- Electrical toys are a potential burn hazard. Children under age 8 should not use toys with electrical plugs or batteries.