

Avoiding Toy Hazards

Does your facility allow children to bring in toys or accept toy donations? Along with the joy a toy can bring, there are a number of hazards that can accompany them. You can take steps to help reduce the risks associated with toys by increasing your staff's awareness and educating parents, as well.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission's website (www.cpsc.gov) is an excellent resource for potential recalls associated with lead paint or other manufacturer-related hazards. Check it before accepting any toy donations. Additional hazards may be associated with the selection, use, supervision, and upkeep of toys after they have been used.

The Toy Industry Association provides the following recommendations to support your efforts to provide safe toys:

- Always supervise children as they play.
- Follow age recommendations and packaging labels to ensure the toy is appropriate.
- Avoid toys with small parts for children under age 3, or children who still mouth toys.
- Look for toys with sturdy parts and tightly secured joints.
- Discard broken toys, and those with sharp points or rough edges.
- Inspect the condition of second-hand toys; keep the original packaging and instructions.
- Listen to toys with noises to make sure they are appropriate.
- If you shop for toys, buy from a reputable retailer.
- Carefully follow instructions for toy assembly and use.
- Batteries in toys should be firmly attached and not accessible to children.
- Be a good role model, and set an example for safe play.

Prevent the sharing of toys that have been mouthed. Toys that cannot be washed and sanitized should not be used. Supervision also needs to include controlling aggressive behaviors associated with toy play. Arguments, fights, and throwing of toys should be stopped immediately.

Toys can be hazardous if not properly stored after use. Inspect walkways frequently, removing any toys that may pose a slip and fall hazard. Be mindful that active visitor hours may require a more aggressive upkeep policy.

To store toys, keep them at ground level in an easily accessible storage bin with a removable lid. Storing toys on shelves may encourage a child to climb up shelves, tables, or chairs, potentially leading to a fall. Or children may pull objects down from shelves that can strike them in the head.