



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Prevent toy-related injuries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In 2001, an estimated 255,100 children were treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries, and there were 25 toy-related deaths involving children under 15 reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The leading types of toys implicated and the numbers of deaths were as follows: non-powered scooters, 10; balloons, 4; and riding toys, 3.

"Shopping for toys can be exciting and fun, but it can also be frustrating. There can be thousands of toys to choose from in one store, and it's important to choose the right toy for the right age child. Toys meant for older children can be dangerous for younger children," said Carol Mysinger, director of the Injury Prevention Division, Alabama Department of Public Health.

The Alabama Department of Public Health and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission remind everyone to keep their holiday season safe by following these precautions:

Toy Safety Shopping Tips

Be sure to read the label. The CPSC requires toy manufacturers to meet stringent safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide. Labels on toys that state "not recommended for children under 3...contains small parts," are labeled that way because they may pose a choking hazard to children in those age groups. Toys should be developmentally appropriate to suite the skills, abilities and interests of the child.

Under 3 years old

- Children under 3 tend to put everything in their mouths. Avoid buying toys intended for older children that may have small parts that pose a choking danger.
- Never let children of any age play with uninflated or broken balloons because of the choking danger.
- Avoid marbles, balls and games with balls, that have a diameter of 1.75 inches or less. These products also pose a choking hazard to young children.
- Children at this age pull, prod and twist toys. Look for toys that are well-made with tightly secured eyes, noses and other parts.
- Avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.

Ages 3 through 5

- Avoid toys that are made with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.
- Look for household arts materials, including crayons and paint sets, marked with the designation "ASTM D-4236." This means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and, if necessary, labeled with cautionary information.
- Teach older children to keep their toys away from their younger brothers and sisters.

Ages 6 through 12

- For all children, adults should check toys periodically for breakage and potential hazards. Damaged or dangerous toys should be repaired or thrown away.
- If buying a toy gun, be sure the barrel, or the entire gun, is brightly colored so that it's not mistaken for a real gun.
- If you buy a bicycle for any age child, buy a helmet too, and make sure the child wears it.
- Teach all children to put toys away when they have finished playing so they don't trip over them or fall on them.

There was a rise in the estimated toy-related injuries from 2000 to 2001. The increase can be primarily attributed to a rise in injuries associated with unpowered scooters (from 42,505 injuries in 2000 to 99,812 in 2001). Seventy-nine percent (202,500) of the injuries for 2001 were to children under 15 years of age and 30 percent (77,100) were to children under 5. Twenty-one percent (52,600) of the injuries were to persons 15 and up.

Overall, males were involved in 60 percent of the toy-related injuries. Most of the victims (98 percent) were treated and released from the hospital. Likewise, 21 of the 25 fatalities involved male victims. The victims ranged in age from 3 months to 12 years old.

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