



## TOY SAFETY

### The Issue

Toys are regulated for safety in Canada. However, it is important to be aware of the risks that can be associated with toys or toy use, so that you can take steps to protect your child's health.

### Background

In Canada, responsibility for toy safety is shared among governments, the toy industry, safety associations, parents and caregivers. Any toy advertised, sold or imported in Canada must meet the safety requirements defined in the Hazardous Products Act and the Hazardous Products (Toys) Regulations.

Toy makers must ensure that their toys meet these regulations and Health Canada's Product Safety Officers regularly check stores for unsafe toys. Sometimes unsafe toys do make their way onto store shelves and into homes. Older toys that were once safe may not be anymore, or the way some toys are used may expose children to hazards.

### The Health Risks of Unsafe Toys

The risks to children's health from unsafe toys or unsafe use of toys include the following:

- Children under three years of age tend to put things in their mouths. Small toys, balls or toy parts pose choking hazards to young children.

- Toys with long or stretchy cords that can become wrapped around a child's neck present a strangulation hazard.
- Loud toys can damage a child's sensitive hearing.
- Sharp edges or points on a toy can cut a child.
- Toy packaging such as plastic bags and plastic wrap, foam, tape or ties can suffocate or choke a child.
- Ride-on toys can tip and children on ride-on toys can move very quickly, running into objects or falling down stairs.
- Latex balloons have caused a number of deaths. The balloon or a piece of broken balloon can be inhaled and can block a child's airway.

### Minimizing Your Risk

Here are some tips to help you choose safe toys and keep children safe when they play.

#### Buying toys

Read and follow the age label on the toy. Toys for older children may not be safe for younger children.

Small toys, small balls or small loose toy parts should never be given to children under three years of age.



Look for choking hazards on toys for children under three years of age. For instance, check:

- squeeze toys for loose or removable squeakers
- toy cars and trucks for loose or removable wheels or other small parts
- the eyes, nose and other small items on stuffed and plush toys to make sure they cannot be pulled off.

Read and follow the warnings and other safety messages on toy packaging.

Look for sturdy, well-made toys.

Make sure that infant toys like rattles and teethingers are large enough that they won't get stuck in an infant's throat.

Avoid toys with long or highly stretchable cords.

Avoid loud toys. A toy that is loud for an adult is likely too loud for a child.

Check that the toy does not have sharp points or edges.

Choose ride-on toys that suit the child's age, size and abilities. Check that the toy will not tip when the child is using it, and that it is stable when weight is placed on any riding point.

Examine home-made toys for all of the same hazards listed above.

### **After buying toys**

Always supervise your children when they are playing and teach them how to use toys safely.

Promptly remove and discard all toy packaging.

Read and follow all safety and assembly instructions.

Use ride-on toys far away from stairs, traffic, swimming pools and other dangerous areas. Remove hazards such as furniture, lamps, cords or appliances before play begins.

Teach older children to keep their toys and games out of reach of younger children.

Store toys for older children separately from those for younger children.

Check toys often for hazards like loose parts, broken pieces or sharp edges. Repair or discard any weak or broken toys.

Use a toy box without a lid, or one with a lightweight lid that will not fall on a child. Make sure the box has large air holes for breathing, in case a child climbs inside.

### **General safety**

Only adults should install batteries in toys. Improper installation, or mixing different battery types, can cause batteries to leak or overheat and could injure a child. Check that young children cannot open a toy's battery compartment. Do not let a child sleep with a battery-operated toy.

Always keep uninflated latex balloons or broken balloon pieces out of reach of children. Latex balloons are best used for decoration, never play.

## **Health Canada's Role**

Health Canada administers and enforces the Hazardous Products Act and the Hazardous Products (Toys) Regulations. Health Canada monitors the marketplace and

takes action on toys that do not meet the requirements of the legislation. Potentially hazardous toys identified through inspections, consumer complaints or trade complaints are evaluated at the Product Safety Laboratory.

## **Need More Info?**

If you would like more information, or if you think you have a toy that could be dangerous, contact your nearest Health Canada Product Safety Office:

Regional offices

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/contact.htm>

Or call (613) 952-1014 and ask for the telephone number of the Health Canada Product Safety Office nearest you.

See Is your child safe by the Consumer Products Safety Programme at:

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/child\\_safe.htm](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/child_safe.htm)

See Safety with Radar at the Consumer Products Safety Programme site at:

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/childrens\\_corner.htm](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/childrens_corner.htm)

Or see Toy Safety from Child and Family Canada at:

[http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/rs026\\_en.htm](http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/rs026_en.htm)

The Children's Safety Association of Canada Toy Safety Checklist at: <http://www.safekid.org/toy.htm>

Additional It's Your Health articles can be found at:

[www.healthcanada.ca/iyh](http://www.healthcanada.ca/iyh)

You can also call (613) 957-2991