

## HELPFUL TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE

### Safe at Play

Play is a very important part of childhood because it helps children develop physically, mentally, and socially while having fun. Children explore their environment by playing with toys, but toys can cause injuries and even death if they are used improperly. In the United States, approximately 212,000 emergency room visits were caused by toy-related injuries in 2002. That same year, at least 13 children under the age of 12 died as a result of toy-related injuries, mostly due to choking, suffocation, or other airway obstruction.

Parents, grandparents, child care providers and friends selecting toys for children need to be sure the toys are safe and age-appropriate.

**INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN SHOULD BE SUPERVISED AT ALL TIMES WHILE PLAYING.**

The following are some tips for choosing toys for safe play.

- **Put Only the Baby in the Crib:** Stuffed animals and other toys should not be placed in the crib. They can choke or suffocate a child. Also, toddlers sometimes use toys to boost themselves over the crib railing, which can result in falls and/or head injuries.
- **Think Big:** Toys for infants and toddlers should be large enough that they cannot fit into a child's mouth, nose or ear. Use a toilet paper tube to test if a toy is a choking hazard. If the item can fit completely into the tube or can be pushed into the tube (such as a spongy ball), it can choke a child. Toys that can form a tight seal around the top of the tube, such as a deflated balloon or a hard ball, can also be choking hazards.
- **Buy and Use Age-Appropriate Toys:** Check the package's information for age recommendations. Infant and toddler toys should not have sharp edges or points, or parts that can be removed and become choking or suffocation hazards. Toys for older siblings should be kept away from infants and toddlers, since they can be choking hazards or may have parts that can pinch or cut a younger child. To report a toy-related complaint, call the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at **1-800-638-2772**.
- **Read All Labels:** Be sure to follow all instructions, recommendations and warnings included with a toy. Save instructions for future reference.
- **Keep Balloons Away:** Balloons cause almost one-quarter of choking deaths in children. A balloon or pieces of a popped balloon can become stuck in the throat, covering a child's airway.
- **Be Cautious with Tug and Pull Toys:** Make sure toys are sturdy and constructed well. Check toys for loose ribbons or strings that can be easily pulled off. Ribbons and strings can be strangulation hazards.
- **Watch Out!:** Check all toys periodically. Toys wear out with use, causing seams and edges to come apart and small parts to loosen up. The stuffing inside toys and any small part can be choking hazards. For toy safety and recall information, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website at: [www.kidsource.com/CPSC](http://www.kidsource.com/CPSC).
- **Say "No, Thanks!":** Encourage well-meaning family members and friends to buy age-appropriate and safe toys. Put gifts away that are not age-appropriate until a child is old enough to play with them safely.

