



Timely Toy Safety Tips from Dr. Toy - How to Protect Your Child from Harm

In light of recent events in the toy industry regarding recall concerning product safety, world-renowned author and expert on child development and toys Stevanne Auerbach, PhD, “Dr. Toy,” is reiterating a dozen of her most valuable child safety postings from her website and book to make consumers more aware and to spur them to action to protect their children.

“The recent toy recalls have brought child safety concerns to the forefront of news. It is a string of unfortunate instances, but the toy companies involved have responded in a very responsible way. The most important issue here is the total safety of the children,” Dr. Toy explained. “However, consumers (parents/grandparents) should not stop playing with children or limiting play options because of a small segment of recalled toy products.

There are millions of toys out there that are fun and safe products. It is a wake-up call for parents, teachers and childcare providers to be more diligent in selecting products that are age-appropriate for children and to always supervise playtime and the children’s use of their toys.”

Dr. Toy outlines a dozen easy things to remember about toy safety, playing with children, and choosing new toys:

1. Specifically for parents with children under the age of six: Observe what the child is currently playing with in the home. (Particularly if there is an older sibling in the home.) The younger child may want to try products that are not age appropriate or have small parts. The child may also want to play with other small objects and put them in the mouth.
2. Look through your current toys at home. Get rid of any broken, chipped, or discolored products. And if a child loves a product so much that it is over used and dangerously worn-down, consider replacing it. Make sure the toys are kept in good repair and are cleaned regularly.
3. There are thousands of wonderful, safe products on the market that are made in the USA, China and other countries. You need to be mindful of the parts and components that

are in the products you are selecting.

4. Watch for clutter in your child's play areas. Are there products that are not being played with right now? Think about taking some items away for a month or two and then bringing them back into circulation. We call it "recycling the toy box." Children will feel like they have new toys. Current items get good use and other items return as new finds.

5. Know your toy stores. Most retailers are very well informed and can be your best advocate for appropriately aged products that would fit a description of your child's interest.

6. Knowledge of your toy store also helps in cases like recalls because they can be your best information on exactly what product or products can have a problem. They can also assist in a return policy if necessary. Toy store owners have a vested interest in protecting children and keeping their customers happy. They will try to help the consumer.

7. Read the labels on the packages. If clear information is not there, you should be wary. The information should be upfront and clearly visible about the age group and any other issues that may limit the use of the product to different demographics.

8. You can teach your children to use their toys appropriately; not to break them, or misuse them. Toys are designed for reasonable use. Beyond that is when hazards can occur. Children also need to learn to put toys away carefully and to use them safely.

9. Look for products that are appropriate for your child. In addition to the age range, many parents buy products that are higher ages than their child because they want their child to be more advanced. This can be its own hazard in that a frustrated child can act out and not perform to proper age appropriate behaviors, not just age appropriate skills.

10. Research for guidance, such as this list, and other product recommendations from reliable sources. Look for protection seals, award testing, and reputable organization's recommendations.

11. If you have any doubts, contact the Consumer Product Safety Commission www.cpsc.gov. There are available to help. See www.drtoy.com for the CPSC site and other resources.

12. Most importantly, if you have a child with a tendency to put things in the mouth, you must be extra, extra vigilant. Make sure toys with small or loose parts are either not used or carefully monitored. Also be sure that products are cleaned and disinfected, especially if your child attends childcare, babysitting, preschool or playgroup on a regular basis.

"These things are all so important because we don't want to stop kids from playing with toys. It will limit them. Children need toys to learn, play, and develop mentally, socially and physically. Toys are a means for developing a child's "PQ" or "Play Quotient", which

is intelligent and responsible play that engages, educates, creates and is overall fun,” Dr. Toy, continues. “Parents forget that a child’s play is their first job in life. You don’t want them to lose their natural exuberance, curiosity and fascination. The turn taking, reading directions, following rules, good sportsmanship, even learning special dimensions, geography, geometry, math, spelling; they are all part of play with many toys and games.

Children develop best when they are happy. Toys that teach are the toys that fully engage a child, challenge and make them happy and help to extend the play quotient-the ability to be playful.”

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