



County of Yolo

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Making Safe Holiday Toy Selections

Woodland, CA--While making toy selections this holiday season, it is important to keep safety in mind. Most parents and gift givers know that a good way to select toys is by looking at the minimum appropriate age for the toy. Since toys with small parts or parts that could break away can be a choking hazard for younger children, these toys will usually be marked with an "Age 3+."

What we don't always look for is the hidden danger of exposure to lead in paint and toys and some imported candies.

The Yolo County Lead Poisoning Prevention program seeks to educate parents, teachers, and child and health care providers on the dangers of lead poisoning. Even small amounts of lead can have a lifelong effect on brain development and learning of children. Lead can be found in paint manufactured before 1977 in the United States and even today in some imported painted products such as toys, dinnerware, jewelry, and candies.

The Consumer Protection Safety Commission (CPSC) recently discussed new federal safety rules that are in place for toys that will give American consumers greater confidence when they go shopping this holiday season. The new rules include lowering the acceptable amount of lead and phthalates in toys and expanding the categories of toys that fall under mandatory lead testing.

"CPSC has worked hard this year to give parents and grandparents greater confidence that the toys they seek to purchase have enhanced safety protections for children," said Chairman Inez Tenenbaum.

So far in calendar year 2009, CPSC has had 38 toy recalls, which is down from 162 in 2008 and 148 in 2007. Toy recalls involving lead paint are also down. This year, there have been 14 recalls involving lead, down from 63 in 2007 and 85 in 2008. CPSC attributes this decline to increased enforcement at the ports, cooperation with other nations, consumer awareness and education, and compliance by the industry with new federal safety rules.

Here are some general safety steps consumers can take while toy shopping this holiday season:

Scooters and other Riding Toys

Riding toys, skateboards, and in-line skates go fast and falls could be deadly. Helmets and safety gear should be worn at all times and be sized to fit.

Small Balls and other Toys with Small Parts

For children younger than age three, avoid toys with small parts, which can cause choking.

Balloons

Children can choke or suffocate on un-inflated or broken balloons. Keep un-inflated balloons away from children younger than eight years old. Discard broken balloons at once.

Magnets

For children under age six, avoid building or play sets with small magnets. If magnets or pieces with magnets are swallowed, serious injuries and/or death can occur.

And once the gifts are open:

- Immediately discard plastic wrappings or other packaging on toys before they become dangerous play things.
- Keep toys appropriate for older children away from younger brothers or sisters.
- Charging batteries should be supervised by adults. Chargers and adapters can pose thermal burn hazards to young children. Pay attention to instructions and warnings on battery chargers. Some chargers lack any device to prevent overcharging.

Along with educating the public, the Yolo County Health Department Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is equally committed to working with local business owners and healthcare providers to make sure to keep Yolo County kids lead-free.

For more information on preventing lead poisoning go to the Yolo County Lead Poisoning prevention website at www.yolocounty.org/Index.aspx?page=128

For more information about the Consumer Protection Safety Commission visit their website www.cpsc.gov.

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