



## Don't Toy Around with Safety

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**Media Contact:** Jerad Albracht, 608-224-5007  
Bill Cosh, Communications Director, 608-224-5020

MADISON – Seeing the excitement on a child's face when they open holiday gifts is one of the joys of the season. But picking that perfect present goes beyond choosing what is popular, cute, or exciting – the safety of the children in the home needs to be a significant consideration as well. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection asks toy shoppers to review the safety of each potential gift before hitting the register this holiday season.

“There are a number of safety factors to consider when shopping for gifts for children,” said Michelle Reinen, Director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection. “A good starting point for assessing a toy is by closely reviewing the safety labels and age grading information on the toy packaging and any additional warnings about small parts, magnets, chemicals and other risks.”

When shopping for toys, look for these labels on packaging or warnings on product webpages:

- General warning labels listing small parts, magnets, suffocation hazards, etc.
- Age grading: use the manufacturer's suggested age range as a foundation for whether a toy is appropriate for the physical development of a child.
- All toys: “ASTM F963” – this label indicates that a toy meets the latest toy safety standards. All toys sold in the U.S. must meet this standard. ASTM F963 includes guidelines and test methods to prevent injuries from choking, sharp edges and other potential hazards.
- Art materials: “ASTM D4236” – this label indicates that art materials have been reviewed by a toxicologist and are labeled with cautionary information, if necessary.
- Toys with fabrics: “Flame resistant” – this label means that a material will resist burning and should extinguish quickly once removed from an ignition source.

Some additional things to consider when shopping for gifts for children:

- Pick up any safety items that go along with a toy such as a helmet for a bike or scooter.
- For homes with younger children, avoid toys with small parts, magnets, cords or strings.
- Choose gifts that are both age and skill appropriate for the child.
- Watch out for “button batteries,” coin-sized (or smaller) batteries that are used in some toys, remote controls, flashlights, hearing aids and more. Never let a child play with these batteries as they pose a choking hazard and can cause serious internal chemical burns in as little as two hours. Make sure that any toys that use these batteries have a screw to secure the battery compartment.
- Watch out for gifts containing high-powered magnets. These small “rare earth” magnets can easily be swallowed by children and can attract one another in the intestinal tract, requiring surgical removal.
- Avoid no-name products. A manufacturer's name and address is not a guarantee of safety, but it means you can track down a legitimate company to remedy problems.
- Look for hidden dangers such as sharp points, loud noises or projectiles.
- If you are purchasing wooden toys, look for splinters or sharp edges.

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- If you are purchasing used toys, skip ones with chipped paint in order to avoid possible exposure to lead.

Safety concerns don't end at the register. Be mindful of younger children and keep small or pointed toys and accessories out of their reach. Make sure to read any battery charging instructions that come with toys as chargers and adapters can overheat and pose burn hazards to young children. Keep an eye on the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission's (CPSC) website ([cpsc.gov](http://cpsc.gov)) for new recalls and consider signing up for DATCP's [Keep Your Kids Safe e-newsletter](#) in order to receive a monthly summary of the children's products recalled by the CPSC.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov), call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to [datcp hotline@wi.gov](mailto:datcp hotline@wi.gov).

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