December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, hospital emergency rooms treated an estimated 251,700 toy-related injuries in 2010 throughout the United States. 72% were to people less than 15 years of age. Additionally, in 2007 alone, toymakers recalled over 19 million toys worldwide because of safety concerns such as lead paint and small magnets.

When it comes to toys and gifts, the excitement and desire to get your children their favorite toys may cause shoppers to forget about safety factors associated with them. Before you make these purchases, it is critical to remember to consider the safety and age range of the toys.

Prevent Blindness America has declared December as Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month. The group encourages everyone to consider if the toys they wish to give suits the age and individual skills and abilities of the individual child who will receive it, especially for infants and children under age three.

This holiday season (and beyond), please consider the following guidelines for choosing safe toys for all ages:

- Inspect all toys before purchasing. Avoid those that shoot or include parts that fly off. The toy should have no sharp edges or points and should be sturdy enough to withstand impact without breaking, being crushed, or being pulled apart easily.
- When purchasing toys for children with special needs try to: Choose toys that may appeal to different senses such as sound, movement, and texture; consider interactive toys to allow the child to play with others; and think about the size of the toy and the position a child would need to be in to play with it.
- Be diligent about inspecting toys your child has received. Check them for age, skill level, and developmental appropriateness before allowing them to be played with.
- Look for labels that assure you the toys have passed a safety inspection – “ATSM” means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.
- Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (give a helmet with the skateboard)
- Keep kids safe from lead in toys by:
  - Educating yourself about lead exposure from toys
  - Understanding symptoms of lead poisoning
  - Knowing what toys have been recalled
  - Being aware that old toys may contain lead in the paint
  - Having your children wash their hands frequently and call your doctor if you suspect your child has been exposed to lead.
- Do NOT give toys with small parts (including magnets and “button” batteries which can cause serious injury or death if ingested) to young children, they tend.

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to put things in their mouths, and may choke. If the piece fits inside a toilet paper
roll, it is not for kids under age three.

- Do NOT give toys with ropes, cords or heating elements.
- Do NOT give crayons and markers unless they are labeled “nontoxic”.

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