

# Playing It Safe

## Toys and Children's Eye Safety

According to Prevent Blindness America, children sustain approximately 11,000 toy-related eye injuries each year. That's scary stuff. But don't panic! The vast majorities of toy-related eye injuries are treated and have no long-term adverse effects. But more importantly, they are easily preventable.

## Keeping an Eye on the Dangers

Toys are wildly entertaining and captivating for kids and they also play a tremendous role in childhood development. But fun does not always equal safe. Children under the age of 15 account for nearly three quarters (74%) of all toy related injuries in 2009.

The toys below should be avoided completely or only permitted with close parental supervision for children of the appropriate age. Check toy packaging for age guidelines:

**GUNS** are the worst offenders of eye safety. Year after year, BB guns, paintball and pellet guns continue to top the danger list, and are actually considered firearms in some states.

**TOY WEAPONS** in general, are an invitation to eye injury. Watch out specifically for projectile toys with parts that shoot out or fly off as they can be extremely dangerous. Toys with sharp points, including darts and bows & arrows are all hazards to children's eyes.

**LASER POINTERS** are not toys, but may be used as toys and can be harmful and cause retinal damage in certain situations and should be used with extreme caution.

A new toy can rush onto the scene at any time and is not guaranteed to be safe. Arm yourself with safety information and stay in the know on toy dangers. You can consult the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for a list of toy recalls by visiting [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or calling (800) 638-2772. You can also view World Against Toys Causing Harm, Inc.'s (W.A.T.C.H.) annual "10 Worst Toys" list by logging onto [www.toysafety.org](http://www.toysafety.org). Remember: do your safety research before hitting the toy aisle, not after.

## Set your Sights on the Right Toys

The decline in toy recalls indicates that toy companies are stepping up to the safety plate. However, it's smart to establish your own safety checks to help you make the right toy decisions for your little one. Here are some steps to follow:

**PREPARE:** Educate yourself on the right toys for your child's age group and research the toys that interest him or her.

**READ LABELS:** Read all safety messages on toy packaging and look for the letters "ASTM" on the label. This means that the toy conforms to certain national safety standards

**PLAY INSPECTOR:** Are there sharp pointed edges on the toy? (A CPSC regulation prohibits sharp points in new toys and other articles intended for use by children under 8 years of age.) Examine for sturdy construction. You don't want a toy that could break and shatter into sharp pieces.

**KEEP SAFETY GOING AT HOME:** Once a toy has passed your safety checks, demonstrate proper use of the toy to your child since misuse of the toy is also another cause of injury. Helmets and safety gear should always be worn with all riding toys, including bikes, tricycles and scooters.



For more information, call

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