

Toys: 12 Tips for a Safe Christmas

Toys make an essential contribution to child development. Toy Safety is a key priority and to ensure the best experience for our children over the holiday period, consumers should keep in mind the following list of TIPS when selecting a toy:

- ✓ **Be sure to read all labels on toys.** Be aware of age and safety recommendations - take them seriously. *Do not buy toys that do NOT have the CE mark displayed on the toy or its packaging.* Although the CE mark is not intended as consumer guidance, it is a commitment from the manufacturer that the product complies with all relevant and applicable EU safety requirements, which are amongst the most stringent in the world.
- ✓ **Choose toys suitable for the child's age, abilities and skill level.** Toys that are not intended for a child's specific age group may pose safety hazards. Be sure to read and follow the age recommendation - particularly the 0 to 3 symbol (see right) and the words 'not suitable for children under 36 months' accompanied by the indication of the hazard. This symbol and wording is a warning and not a recommendation. 
- ✓ **Do not give toys with small parts to children under the age of 3 years,** as these children have a tendency to put toys in their mouths and small parts present a choking hazard. Make sure stuffed animals' eyes, noses and other small parts are tightly secured.
- ✓ **Follow instructions carefully for proper toy assembly and use.** Keep the instructions and information that are packaged with the toy in a safe place.
- ✓ **Always buy toys from reputable retailers and online outlets.** Reputable retailers take care about the products they sell and will usually accept returns. Rogue traders, however, tend to disregard relevant health and safety requirements and may also deal in counterfeit toys. Special care should be given to toys purchased online, toys given to children as gifts, and toys purchased second-hand.
- ✓ **Supervise children as they play** - make sure that all toys are played with as intended and are suitable for the age and abilities of the child. With certain toys - such as scooters, roller skates and bicycles - helmets and safety gear should always be worn.
- ✓ **Periodically examine toys** for breakage or wear that could cause injury or other risk to the health and safety of the child. Discard broken toys immediately.
- ✓ **Ensure any toys intended for older children are kept well out of reach of children under 36 months,** as they may contain small parts.
- ✓ **Remove and discard (recycle where possible) all packaging,** including plastic bags, cardboard, paper and plastic windows (but always keep the instructions!). Make sure younger children do not play with plastic packaging where there could be a risk of suffocation. Take care also to recycle batteries safely.
- ✓ **Teach your children to put away their toys to avoid accidents.** Don't leave toys out on the stairs or on the floor in busy areas of the home.
- ✓ **Always tell the manufacturer and your public authorities if you or your child finds a safety problem with a toy.** Do not hesitate to consult the EU rapid alert system's website (RAPEX) <http://ec.europa.eu/rapex>. This provides details of dangerous products taken off the market in your country, including toys.
- ✓ **Remember these tips apply all year and not only at Christmas time!**

