



Area children's hospital offers toy safety tips

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Press Release from Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University Health

As the holidays quickly approach, many parents are looking for the perfect toys that will give their children a chance to learn and play. But experts at [Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University Health](#) encourage parents to shop carefully as certain toys can cause injury or even death.

"The most common offenders are toys with small parts, balloons or balls," said Cara Fast, coordinator of the [Riley Safety Store at IU Health](#). "Children, especially under age 3, want to put everything in their mouths. But their upper airways are still very small, which greatly increases the risk of choking."

According to Fast, choking is one of the leading causes of toy-related death. Underinflated or broken latex balloons account for about 40 percent of these deaths.

If a child does manage to swallow these small toy parts, serious injury can occur. For instance, ingested coin-sized alkaline or lithium "button batteries" send more than 3,500 people to poison centers each year, according to the [National Capital Poison Center](#).

"These batteries can damage the lining of the esophagus, stomach and intestines or even burn holes in the esophagus, which can lead to serious injury or death," said [Dr. Joseph O'Neil](#), a developmental pediatrician at Riley at IU Health.

When selecting gifts this season, Fast and O'Neil encourage parents to pay close attention to labels to ensure toys are nontoxic and fire-resistant. Only purchase toys recommended for a child's particular age as toys for older children often contain small parts.

Riley at IU Health also recommends avoiding:

- Toys with strings that can get wrapped around a child's neck and cause strangulation.
- Toys with magnets or batteries that can be easily removed and swallowed.
- Toys with shooting parts, such as toy guns, that can hit children in the eyes.
- Toys that must be plugged into an electrical outlet that could result in burns or electrical shock.
- Scooters or riding toys, which can cause serious falls and collisions. If this advice cannot be heeded, bicycle helmets are strongly encouraged.
- Toys made from thin plastic that will break easily, leaving sharp edges.

"Along with choosing safe toys, I would encourage all parents to learn first aid and CPR in case an injury does occur," Fast said. "Adult supervision during play can help prevent many trips to the emergency room."



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