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Help Keep Thousands of Children Out of the Emergency Room this Holiday Season by Purchasing Safe Toys and Gifts

- Consumers Should Check Their List Twice to Make Sure They Are Purchasing Safe Toys and Gifts for Children-

CHICAGO (Nov. 18, 2014) – Holiday shopping is already in full swing with most stores and online retailers. And, the [National Retail Federation forecasts](#) sales in November and December to increase 4.1 percent from last year to \$616.9 billion. To help consumers, Prevent Blindness, the nation's oldest non-profit eye health and safety group, is providing tips to gift-givers to make sure all gifts are safe, especially those intended for children.

In 2012, the [U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#) estimated that hospital emergency rooms across the country treated 265,000 toy-related injuries. And, 72 percent of those injuries were to children under the age of 15. In fact, approximately 89,500 were to those under 5 years of age.

The most commonly injured part of the body is the head and face area, with the most common injuries being lacerations, contusions, or abrasions. The top three specifically identified toys that were associated with the most estimated injuries for all ages in 2012 were non-motorized scooters, toy balls and toy vehicles.

Before purchasing a toy or gift, Prevent Blindness suggests:

- Read all warnings and instructions on the box.
- Ask yourself or the parent if the toy is right for the child's ability and age. Consider whether other smaller children may be in the home that may have access to the toy.
- Avoid purchasing toys with sharp or rigid points, spikes, rods, or dangerous edges.
- Check the lenses and frames of children's sunglasses; many can break and cause injuries.
- Buy toys that will withstand impact and not break into dangerous shards.

- Look for the letters "ASTM." This designation means the product meets the national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).
- Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off.
- Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (such as a basketball along with eye goggles or a face guard with a new batting helmet for baseball or softball).
- Don't give toys with small parts to young children. Young kids tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking. If any part of a toy can fit in a toilet paper roll, the toy is not appropriate for children under the age of 3.
- Do not purchase toys with long strings or cords, especially for infants and very young children as these can become wrapped around a child's neck.
- Always dispose of uninflated or broken balloons immediately. According to the CPSC, more children have suffocated from them than any other type of toy.
- Ensure that laser product labels include a statement that the device complies with 21 CFR (the Code of Federal Regulations) Subchapter J (per an [American Academy of Ophthalmology recommendation](#)).

“The holidays can get hectic but we need to be diligent when purchasing gifts, especially for children, making sure they are safe and fit each individual child's needs,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “By taking a few precautions, we can spend time with our family and friends and not in the emergency room!”

For more information on safe toys and gifts for children, visit preventblindness.org/safe-toy-checklist, or call Prevent Blindness at (800) 331-2020.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates and regional offices, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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