



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS SHOULD BE AT THE TOP OF EVERYONE'S LIST THIS YEAR

COLUMBUS, OH – The holidays are quickly approaching and retailers are turning on the holiday charm to attract shoppers. When searching for a bargain, it is important to remember to make sure that the toys and gifts you buy for the children on your list are safe and age appropriate. With so much attention focused lately on dangerous toys with high lead content, those that pose choking hazards, and toys that are poorly constructed, it is more important than ever to take precautions.

Last year more than 170,000 children under the age of 15 were treated at the emergency room for toy-related injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. More than 80,000 of those were to children ages 5 and younger. The majority of those injuries were to the head and face, and to which lacerations and contusions made up most of these injuries.

Prevent Blindness Ohio has designated December as Safe Toys and Gifts Month in an effort to provide safety tips to all those buying gifts for children this year. Toys, sporting equipment, jewelry and even art supplies can be harmful to kids if they are not used properly.

Air, BB and spring guns accounted for a large portion of the documented injuries to children's eyes. Any toys that shoot projectiles are always dangerous. Even common products such as pens, pencils, crayons and other art supplies, were involved in many accidents.

"Ninety percent of all eye injuries are preventable but we have to closely monitor our children to ensure their safety and make sure that the toy that is on top of your children's wish list is age and development appropriate," said Sherry Williams, President and CEO of Prevent Blindness Ohio. "We all need to make an effort to take every safety precaution to protect our kids."

Prevent Blindness Ohio recommends the following tips to help make this holiday season an "eye- safe" one for children:

- Avoid toys that shoot or include parts that fly off. Slingshots and even water guns are dangerous because they invite children to target other kids. BB guns should not even be considered toys.

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- Inspect toys for sturdiness. Your child's toys should be durable with no sharp edges or points. The toys should also withstand impact. Dispose of plastic wrapping material immediately on toys as they may have sharp edges.
- Look for the letters "ASTM." This means the product meets the national safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM).
- Gifts of sports equipment should always be accompanied by protective gear (such as a basketball along with eye goggles). The American Academy of Ophthalmology estimates that there are 40,000 sports-related eye injuries each year.
- Read the instructions and the suggested age level on the packaging. Assess whether the item is appropriate for the child's ability and age. Age labeling is provided not just for developmental reasons, but for safety reasons as well.
- Repair or throw away damaged toys.
- Keep toys meant for older children away from younger ones.
- Make a list of safety rules and share them with your child. If your child is playing with friends, tell everyone your safety rules.
- Make recommendations to family members and friends about gifts that you feel are appropriate for your child.
- Remain aware of recalled products. For further information on toy and product recalls, visit the U.S. Product Safety Commission Web site at www.cpsc.gov.

For more information on safe toys and gifts, please visit Prevent Blindness Ohio at www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio's leading volunteer nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight. We serve all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to more than 800,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio is an affiliate of Prevent Blindness America, the country's second-oldest national voluntary health organization. For more information or to make a contribution, visit our website at www.pbohio.org or call 800-301-2020.

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SAFE TOYS PSA

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AS YOU HEAD OUT TO BUY HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR THE CHILDREN ON YOUR LIST THIS YEAR, MAKE SURE "SAFETY" IS AT THE TOP OF YOUR LIST. ANY TOYS THAT SHOOT PROJECTILES ARE ALWAYS DANGEROUS, ESPECIALLY TO THE EYES. LAST YEAR MORE THAN 170,000 CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 15 WERE TAKEN TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM DUE TO TOY-RELATED INJURIES. FOR FREE TIPS ON HOW TO CHOOSE SAFE TOYS AND GIFTS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON CALL PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO AT 800-301-2020 OR VISIT WWW.PBOHIO.ORG.

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