

# "You'll Shoot Your Eye Out!": Toy Safety

## Eye to Eye

### Clinical Notes for Healthcare Providers - Vol 1.8

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*In the 1983 holiday classic, A Christmas Story, 9-year-old Ralphie only has one thing on his mind: opening up a Red Ryder Carbine Action 200-Shot Range Model air rifle on Christmas morning. His mother, teacher, and even the Santa Claus at the department store all give him the same warning: "You'll Shoot Your Eye Out!" As it turns out, there is real cause for concern. One out of every ten eye injuries in children can be traced back to toys. Making sure the next "new and exciting" toy does not cause harm is essential to having a fun and safe holiday season.*

The most common types of eye injuries that occur from toys can range from a scratch on the cornea to more serious injuries: traumatic cataracts, infection, bleeding inside the eye (hyphema), bruising, or retinal detachment. Most of these injuries can be prevented by evaluating the safety of the toy, wearing protective eyewear, and supervising children when playing with a toy that has the potential to cause damage or harm to the eye.

Healthcare providers play a critical role in advising parents on choosing and handling safe toys. Here are several tips to share with your patients on selecting safe toys:

- Check the recommendations on all toys to make sure they are age appropriate and suitable for the child's maturity level. If there are younger siblings, it is important to keep the toys out of the younger children's reach.
- When possible, check toys for seal of approval to see if the toy meets national safety standards from toy safety organizations such as the American Society of Testing Material (ASTM) or the Canadian Toy Testing Council.



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- Do not purchase toys that have projectile or sharp protruding parts. Toys such as darts, guns, arrows, soft foam dart guns, or sharp propelling toys can cause serious eye injuries that can lead to permanent vision loss.
- Safety eyewear with polycarbonate lenses should be worn with sports equipment, chemistry sets, wood working, cross bows, and nerf guns.
- Check toys with sticks or handles (swords, fishing rods, pogo sticks, brooms), making sure they have rounded edges or handles.
- Any toys or devices that have laser or bright lights (such as laser pointers or laser tag guns) can be dangerous. Ensure the laser product label includes a statement that the device complies with 21 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) subchapter.

In addition to choosing the right toys for eye safety, it is also important to make sure that children know how to use them properly. Supervision and modeling safe behaviors teaches children how to play safe while having fun.

Encourage parents and guardians to:

- Check toys regularly to ensure there are not any broken, sharp parts that may be a hazard. Throw away or repair broken toys.
- Teach children to put away toys when they are not being played with.
- Stay informed of any toy recalls. For a full list of product recalls, visit the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).
- Make sure the child understands not to aim or look into any toys or devices with a laser light.
- If you have any concerns regarding a toy's safety, it is best to err on the side of caution and do not allow your child to play with it.

With the proper precautions, toys can be both entertaining and safe. That being said, accidents do happen. Patients who sustain an eye injury should seek medical help as soon as possible, as waiting can hinder their vision and ocular health. We are happy to assist you in your care of pediatric patients. Our pediatric team is here to answer questions and provide care for your patients.

#### References:

American Society of Testing Material (ASTM), <https://www.astm.org/>  
Canadian Toy Testing Council, <http://toy-testing.org/>  
Consumer Product Safety Commission, [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)