



PRESS RELEASE

TO: Editor in Charge

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DON'T TOY WITH EYE SAFETY

Keep Your Keiki Safe and Healthy This Holiday Season

(Honolulu, Hawaii), November 29, 2010 – With the holidays approaching, shopping is in full swing. There are an overwhelming number of toy choices for parents these days. This holiday season, and every year, it is critical to choose appropriate toys for children. There is nothing more stimulating for a child than a new toy, however not every toy is safe for every child. Unfortunately, about 170,000 children under the age of 12 are seen in the ER each year for toy-related injuries. Over 80,000 children under the age of 5 suffer from head and face injuries every year. December has been designated Safe Toys and Celebration Awareness Month by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Children are born with an underdeveloped visual system that develops as they do. Newborns can only see objects close up and toddlers and preschoolers are normally a little nearsighted. Because of their underdeveloped visual system children tend to use their toys very close to their eyes and face.

Since safety is important, follow these steps when considering toys for a child. Inspect the toy before and after it is bought. It is very important to regularly examine toys as wear and tear can make them less safe. Safe toys are age and developmentally appropriate. The recommended ages for a toy should be checked and respected. Even when toys are labeled for children age 3 and up, there may still be smaller pieces, which might not be appropriate for a child age 4 who still puts things in their mouth. Stuffed, plush toys should be machine washable, and made without tiny pieces that can be pulled off, such as button and ribbons. A very popular toy for any age is building blocks, however, make sure the corners and edges are rounded to reduce the risk of eye injury. Double check that the toys do not have any paint or finish that could be toxic or that are peeling or flaking off.

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Age appropriateness is noted on the packaging of most toys sold in this country. It is best to use these recommendations to make an informed decision rather than purchasing a toy because it looks “cool” or “fun to play with.” For small children, an adult should choose the toy and not the child. The child’s statement that all his or her friends have it does not mean the toy is safe for his or her age group.

Avoid toys that shoot objects in the air, such as dart or arrow guns, or slingshots, as these can cause major eye injury for the child as well as those around them. These types of toys may be appropriate for older children and should be supervised by an adult. Any toys which shoot such as bb guns, pellet guns, and dart guns have a high potential to cause eye injuries. Make sure children understand appropriate safety measures when playing with these toys.

When children are playing with any toys, they should be supervised. Parents should make sure that children wear protective gear for their eyes when necessary. Wearing eye protection can avoid a number of injuries.

Toys that will be age appropriate as well as stimulate visual development, develop hand eye coordination and understand spatial relationships might be:

Birth to 12 months: Brightly colored mobiles, rattles, balls, stuffed animals, activity gyms and blocks.

1 year olds: Stuffed animals, blocks, puzzles, finger paints, modeling clay, stacking/nesting toys, or musical toys.

2 year olds: Stuffed animals, blocks, puzzles, finger paints, modeling clay, stacking/nesting toys, musical toys, dress-up clothes, child size household items (broom, lawn mower), sandbox, kiddie pool, swings, backyard gym/climbing toys, and toy typewriter or cash register.

3 to 6 year olds: Large crayons, makers, toy computer or computer games, board games, roller skates, sewing toys or stinging beads, toy camera, stuffed animals, blocks, puzzles, finger paints, modeling clay, stacking/nesting toys, musical toys, dress-up clothes, child size household items (broom, lawn mower), sandbox, kiddie pool, swings, backyard gym/climbing toys, and toy typewriter or cash register.

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7 to 12 year olds: Science items (microscope, telescope, chemistry set), books, bicycle, musical instrument, tape player, skateboard, jump rope, electric train, sport equipment, video games, computer games, board games.

Dr. Tortora, a board certified ophthalmologist, is host of “The Hawaiian Eye Show,” a weekly informational radio program about healthy vision. He and his colleagues at Hawaiian Eye Center are committed to educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care. To learn more about a variety of eye health issues, please call the Hawaiian Eye Center at 621-8488 where “*life has never looked better.*”

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