

We win exceptional verdicts and settlements for our clients in cases of brain injury, medical malpractice, wrongful death and other severe injuries.

In This Issue

[See It! Own It! Resist It!](#)

[Probing for Product Protection](#)

[Cross These Off Your List](#)

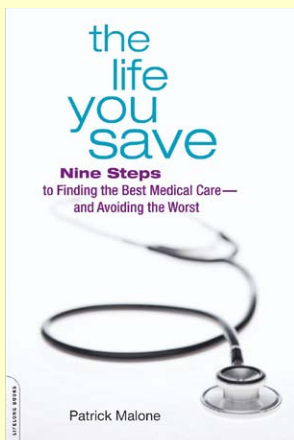
[Additional Resources](#)

Quick Links

[Our firm's website](#)

[Read an excerpt](#)
from Patrick
Malone's book:

***The Life You Save:
Nine Steps to
Finding the Best
Medical Care -- and
Avoiding the Worst***



Play It Safe: How to Choose the Right Toys

Toy-shopping season is in full swing, and although you want to give your kids and grandkids what they ask for, some toys can be more dangerous than fun. This month we discuss what to look for in a safe, age-appropriate toy, and how to recognize the risks of toys the kids might already have.

Choosing the best playmates often is common sense, but when it comes to toys, powerful marketing forces and product safety regulations that don't always find their mark can undermine a parent's best intentions and instincts.

See It! Own It! Resist It!

Like other consumer products, toys are subject to fashion, and the most powerful driver of toy trends is popular culture. Movies, celebrities, sports ... they all influence what kids like and what they want to play with.

World Against Toys Causing Harm (WATCH), a nonprofit, explains that toy manufacturers see big profits in the fan frenzy over movies and TV programs that appeal to children. For example, the popular "Hunger Games" franchise boosts the appetite for bows and arrows, but they're appropriate and safe for far fewer children than want to play with them.

Toy manufacturers often promote products in a way inconsistent not only with a child's age and development, but even with their own instructions. The packaging of one riding toy that made WATCH's list of the 10 Worst Toys of 2014 depicted a boy careening on the vehicle without a helmet even though the product instructions call for it.

Toys are promoted in ways to make every kid want one whether or not it's a good idea, and popular culture is not always your friend. Every parent knows that sometimes life is easier if you just give in. Doing so often means making an impulse purchase, but you shouldn't

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Read our [Patient Safety Blog](#), which has news and practical advice from the frontlines of medicine for how to become a smarter, healthier patient.



buy toys without careful review of their potential to harm, whether or not it's stated on the box.

Probing for Product Protection

You might believe that if a toy is expensive, well-known or has been on the market for a long time, its safety is beyond question. According to Kids In Danger (KID), another nonprofit aimed at raising parental awareness to keep kids safe, even established or high-end toys can be unsafe.

The [Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act](#) (CPSIA) of 2008 mandated safety testing for children's products and toys. Still, in 2012, nearly 77,900 children younger than 5 were treated in emergency rooms for injuries related to nursery products. Older products escape this oversight, and recalled products are still found in households everywhere. Although toys now have to meet safety standards, plenty slip through the cracks.

And although the feds issue regular warnings and recalls for demonstrably dangerous products, not everybody who owns one is aware of the recall, and when it's passed on to someone else, the new user seldom is aware of its dicey history.

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group (USPIRG) is an excellent place to learn about [toy safety standards](#). You can track product recalls by the CPSC page [here](#). Keep current with toy safety news and recalls with regular [updates by KID](#).

Cross These Off Your List

In general, parents should be mindful of these toy hazards, especially if their children are small. Obviously, the older the child, the more relaxed these guidelines can be.

Choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. Don't buy small toys or toys with small parts for children younger than 3. If it can pass through a toilet paper tube, a toy or part is too small for toddlers and babies and any kid who still puts stuff in her mouth.

Read warning labels -- toys with small parts intended for children ages 3 to 6 are required to include an explicit choking hazard warning.

Never give young children small balls or balloons, which can block the airway. Never give latex balls to children younger than 8.

Projectiles are precisely what your mother was talking about when she warned, "That will put your eye out!" They can cause a wide range of impact injuries, including brain trauma.

Lead and other toxic chemicals are a problem especially in older toys. High levels of lead paint have been found on toys, as well as in vinyl lunch boxes, bibs and in children's costume jewelry.

Avoid toys made of PVC plastic, which can contain toxic phthalates that pose developmental hazards. Go with unpainted wooden or cloth toys instead. Read the labels of play cosmetics and avoid products with xylene, toluene or dibutyl phthalate.

Magnets can be so [dangerous to kids](#) that some have been banned, and small magnets found in building toys, darts, magnetic jewelry and other items can be swallowed, presenting life-threatening complications.

"Button" batteries are tiny, and, like magnets, can cause fatal internal injuries if swallowed. Keep them away from children.

Noise can damage a child's ears, which are more sensitive than an adult's. If a toy seems too loud to you, it's probably too loud for a child. Remove its batteries, or cover the speakers with tape.

Strangulation is a risk with mobiles, cords and drawstrings. Keep them away from cribs, remove knobs and beads from cords longer than 12 inches and don't buy clothing for little kids with drawstrings on the hood -- they can get caught on fixed objects.

In the last year, according to WATCH, there have been at least 17 toy recalls in the U.S. and Canada, representing more than 4.8 million dangerous toys. According to the CPSC, in 2012, there were 11 toy-related deaths of children younger than 15, and about 265,000 toy-related injuries were treated in U.S. emergency rooms.

When you're shopping this year, consider WATCH's "[10 Worst Toys of 2014](#)."

- Air Storm Firetek Bow

Potential for eye injuries in this bow-and-arrow set, despite warnings not to pull arrows back "more than half strength," and that the "fire glow" illuminated arrows and bow are "[n]ot for play in complete darkness."

- Radio Flyer Ziggle

Potential for head and impact injuries as young children are encouraged to "swerve & spin," "try new tricks" and "race around the block...." Despite a warning to wear a helmet and other safety gear, the young rider pictured on the box has no such protection.

- Toysmith CataPencil

Potential for eye injuries as children are encouraged to use this pencil-as-catapult for "target practice for your desktop!" There are no warnings or age recommendations on the packaging.

- Alphabet Zoo Rick & Stack Pull Toy

Potential for strangulation and entanglement injuries because, despite industry standards requiring strings on playpen and crib toys to be shorter than 12 inches, manufacturers are permitted to market "pull toys" like this one with a cord of approximately 20 inches.

- Swat Electric Machine Gun

Potential to be shot because this toy looks like a real weapon. Such realistic fakes have caused kids to die in real gunfire and should never be sold as toys.

- Walmart Wooden Instruments

Potential to choke on and ingest parts from this multi-colored musical instrument set sold for babies as young as 12 months. There is no warnings on the packaging.

- Science Wiz Bottle Rocket Party

Potential for eye, face and other impact injuries among "rocketeers" as young as 8. Safety goggles are not supplied.

- JC Toys Lil' Cutesies -- Best Friends

Potential for choking injuries with these dolls marketed children as young as 2. Many of them come with a detachable bow.

- Toys R Us True Legends Orcs Battle Hammer

Potential for blunt impact injuries among children as young as 3 who are encouraged to be a "Savage Orc" by wielding a hard plastic, nearly 2-foot "Battle Hammer." There is no caution or warning on the packaging.

- Toys R Us Colored Hedgehog

Potential aspiration and ingestion injuries from the soft, colorful animal marketed for infants. The toy has long, stringy hair inadequately rooted and easily removable. No ingestion hazard is offered.

Additional Resources

For more safe toy tips from the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, link [here](#). The organization reminds you to examine toys carefully for potential dangers before you make a purchase, because the CPSC does not test all toys, and not all toys on store shelves necessarily meet CPSC standards.

Sign up for monthly email news alerts and product safety news from [Kids In Danger](#).

More than \$800 million worth of toys, games and children's vehicles come into the U.S. each year from Canada and Mexico. See what the CPSC is doing to [monitor this commerce](#).

Report unsafe toys or toy-related injuries [here](#) or call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Recent Health Care Blog Posts

Here are some recent posts on our patient safety blog that might interest you.

- Combine private greed with regulatory laziness and you have the recipe for a health disaster, in this case, counterfeit surgical screws that were [implanted into many patients' spines](#). They came from a company called Spinal Solutions that swapped out high-quality surgical screws for cheap knockoffs and sold them to surgeons and hospitals in Maryland, Texas, California, Nevada and Wisconsin.
- More issues with robot-assisted surgery -- this time, evidence that [gynecologic surgery comes out worse if the](#)

[surgeon uses a robot](#). And, of course, it costs a lot more than low-tech surgery.

- Generic drug makers are still enjoying a [loophole in the law that bars patients injured by the generic version of a drug from suing for product defect](#). The FDA was supposed to pass a regulation to close the loophole, but now that's been delayed.

Past issues of this newsletter:

Here is a quick [index of past issues of our newsletter](#), most recent first.

Here's to a healthy end of 2014!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Malone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Patrick Malone
Patrick Malone & Associates