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***Trouble in Toyland* demonstrates how to protect kids
from unsafe toys still for sale**

*Report identifies most common dangers, calls for government action*

**Tampa, Fla. --** [Hundreds of thousands](https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/Toy_Report_2018.pdf?qIO1DVoYhV6lzYgcLa04K28yF28BOgdS) of children go to the emergency room every year because of toy-related injuries. To help ensure kids’ safety, Florida Consumer Action Network Foundation and Florida PIRG Education Fund are releasing the 34th-annual [*Trouble in Toyland* report](https://floridapirg.org/feature/usp/trouble-in-toyland-2019), which identifies dangerous products still for sale in 2019 and provides tips for parents and gift-givers.

U.S. Representative Kathy Castor attended the release of the report and commented on Federal action to protect children from dangerous products. Castor urged parents to visit [SaferProducts.gov](http://www.saferproducts.gov/Default.aspx) to search for recalls and report unsafe toys. She advocated parents check recalls.gov for unsafe products.

Dr. Maximo Luque, medical director of the Steinbrenner Children’s Emergency Room at St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital said that, “A trip to the emergency room puts an unwanted twist on holiday celebrations. But the good news is that appropriate selection and proper use of toys, combined with parental supervision, can greatly reduce the incidence and severity of toy-related injuries,” Dr. Luque continued. “When accidents do happen, whether your child swallowed a battery or suffered a hard fall, it’s important to seek medical care immediately.”

“Toys have become safer over the last three decades, but dangerous and toxic toys are still on store shelves. With that in mind, parents need to be vigilant to keep their kids healthy and safe,” said Susan McGrath, FCAN executive director. “Manufacturers and regulators must do more to ensure all toys are safe before they end up in a child’s hands.”

While stronger safety standards have significantly reduced the number of dangerous toys for sale, problems persist. The 2019 report identifies three categories of toys that parents should be on the lookout for: detectable dangers, hidden toxics and hazards, and recalled toys.

**Detectable dangers:** Parents can recognize numerous dangerous products just by looking at them. A few common threats include:

* **Choking hazards:** [Ubbi Connecting bath toys](https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2019/pearhead-recalls-ubbi-connecting-bath-toys-due-to-choking-hazard) and hundreds of thousands of [wooden vehicles sold by Target](https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2019/Target-Recalls-Wooden-Toy-Vehicles-Due-to-Choking-Hazard) were recalled for choking risks. [You can test if a toy is a choking hazard, using a toilet paper roll](https://uspirg.org/feature/usp/choking-hazards).
* **Balloons:** Uninflated balloons are the [primary cause of suffocation death](https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/5087.pdf) in children. Uninflated balloons should be kept away from kids under eight and popped balloons should not be left around.
* **Loud noises:** If an action figure, toy gun or other toy produces loud sounds, it can hurt a child’s hearing. If you hold the toy near your ear and it’s too loud for you, it’s too loud for your child. You can remove the batteries, put tape over the speaker, or decrease the volume.
* **Magnets:** Sculpture kits or puzzles may include powerful magnets that can seriously injure children if ingested. [Two doctors](https://www.statnews.com/2019/08/06/magnetic-toys-harming-kids/) in Portland, Ore. removed 54 of these small magnets from four children in just over a month. Keep these away from children or out of the home altogether.
* **Toys marketed to adults:** For example, fidget spinners may not meet the [same safety standards](https://uspirg.org/reports/usp/lead-fidget-spinners-0) as other toys because they are primarily designed with adults in mind, though they can still be marketed directly or indirectly to children, with designs like [Captain America’s shield](https://www.target.com/p/edgework-imports-captain-america-shield-aluminum-fidget-spinner/-/A-76587131) or a [Transformer](https://www.target.com/p/fidget-its-transformers-bumblebee-cube/-/A-76827171).

**Hidden toxics:** In the last year, toys and other children’s products containing lead, cadmium and boron were found for sale -- posing a health risk parents cannot see.

* **Lead:** Two kids’ musical instruments had illegal levels of lead, according to a [Wall Street Journal investigation](https://www.wsj.com/articles/amazon-has-ceded-control-of-its-site-the-result-thousands-of-banned-unsafe-or-mislabeled-products-11566564990?mod=hp_lead_pos5) this summer. Parents should avoid purchasing toys manufactured before 2008 and be careful of imported, cheaper toys. Manufacturers should enhance testing to keep lead out of toys.
* **Boron:** U.S. PIRG Education Fund testing revealed levels of borax (a compound that includes boron) exceeding [European Union safety standards](https://www.which.co.uk/news/2018/07/childrens-toy-slime-on-sale-with-up-to-four-times-eu-safety-limit-of-potentially-unsafe-chemical/) in [all four](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QGv6ST_DCoDcFcnSPrFYa2djE0Tyfuq4) play slimes we tested. Moderate to high doses of boron can cause nausea, vomiting and other long-term damages. The [DIY 3-Pack of Rainbow Cosmic Slime Shakers](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1QGv6ST_DCoDcFcnSPrFYa2djE0Tyfuq4) contained 75 times the EU standard. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission should establish safety standards for this toxic, including warning labels.
* **Cadmium:** The [Washington state Attorney General](https://www.seattletimes.com/business/amazon/amazon-vows-safety-reforms-after-washington-ag-finds-toxic-lead-and-cadmium-in-childrens-products/) found cadmium above the legal limit of 40 parts per million in children’s jewelry. Cadmium can cause cancer and other health problems. Parents should avoid purchasing cheaper, metallic jewelry.

**Recalled Toys:** The last line of defense is our nation’s recall system. But, U.S. PIRG Education Fund researchers were able to purchase the recalled [INNOCHEER’s Kids Musical Instrument Set](https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2018/childrens-toy-instrument-sets-recalled-due-to-violation-of-the-federal-lead-paint-ban) and [VTech’s Musical Elephant Shaker](https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls/2018/vtech-recalls-infant-rattles-due-to-choking-hazard), which were both recalled more than a year ago. Parents should check to see if a toy has been recalled by visiting [recalls.gov](https://www.recalls.gov/search.html).

“Toys are safer than ever before thanks to years of hard work by consumer, public health, and parent advocacy organizations, along with elected officials and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. But with new threats appearing and old dangers still lurking, there is more work to do to prevent children from ending up sick or in the emergency room, instead of joyfully playing at home,” said Arielle Mizrahi, Florida PIRG field organizer.

The report may be [downloaded here.](https://floridapirg.org/feature/usp/trouble-in-toyland-2019)

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Florida PIRG (Public Interest Research Group) Education Fund is an independent, non-partisan group that works for consumers and the public interest. Through research, public education and outreach, we serve as counterweights to the influence of powerful interests that threaten our health, safety, and wellbeing.

Florida Consumer Action Network Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan group that stands for an America where everyone gets their fair share, does their fair share, and pays their fair share; and where everyone plays by the same rules.