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Toys

Children's safety is top priority

TIS THE SEASON for families to discover the magic, wonder, warmth and the joy that only the December holidays can bring. It's a time for fun and excitement and also time when parents have to be especially attuned to their children's needs.

Despite the best of intentions, the holidays can sometimes be disorienting and confusing to a child. To help fully enjoy the wonderful things this season has to offer, here are some tips to consider.

A major concern parents have during the holiday season is selecting toys for their children that are safe. This is especially true for first-time parents who may be less familiar with appropriate toys and how to judge a toy's safety features.

According to Dr. Paula Abrams-Smith, staff child psychologist for Fisher-Price Toys, evaluating toys for possible safety hazards is something every parent should do. "It's not complicated once you know what to look for," she says.

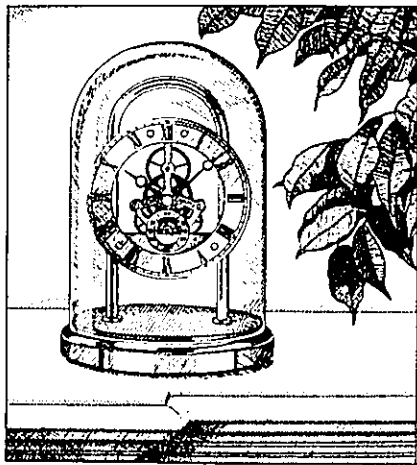
Abrams-Smith advises parents to watch for thin walls, small parts, long pull cords, sharp points, flimsy construction, pinch points and unprotected edges.

"Of course, all types of projectiles, such as darts and rubber bands, should be avoided especially for infants. Try to anticipate how any toy you are considering for your child can be misused," she says.

If this is your baby's first Christmas or Hanukkah, Abrams-Smith suggests a few basic toys that almost all infants find interesting and stimulating. Huggable, cuddly soft toys help provide a secure, comfortable feeling (no matter what your baby's sex) and can be used in almost any play environment. Musical mobiles are ideal for encouraging young infants to listen as well as track movement and color. In bright, eye-catching colors, rattles and teethingers are for mounting, holding, shaking and watching.

Make bath time exciting with floating water toys. Babies love to experiment with pouring and splashing. The use of puppets can help initiate play with other members of the family. Toys with suction-cup bottoms can be played with but stay in place when attached to high chairs, and simple shape sorters begin to teach discrimination skills at an early age.

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