

## Parents: Check Toys for Lead

You've heard lots of reports about lead paint causing recalls of children's toys. While federal officials and health experts work to fix the problem, what can you do to keep your kids safe?

"First, avoid panicking," says Helen Binns, M.D., who chairs the American Academy of Pediatrics committee on environmental health. "Go through your children's toys, and check to see if any are on the list of toys that have been recalled."

You can find the list—back to 1973—at the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Web site. You can even sign up for e-mail updates.

If you have toys that have been recalled, don't throw them out. Take them back to the store where they came from. In some cases, you can get a refund even without a receipt. Check the recall "remedy," as it's known, on the CPSC Web site.

### Watch for secondhand toys

"Less than 10 to 20 percent of recalled toys are returned to stores," says Sarah Chusid, program director for Kids In Danger, a nonprofit group that seeks to protect children. "The rest are floating around out there." They surface at yard sales or secondhand stores. Some are even reclaimed from the trash after well-meaning parents throw them out.

Lead paint has been found in a wide range of toys. Dr. Binns and Chusid single out cheap metal charms and jewelry as items to avoid.

"If you suspect a problem with any toy, take it away from the child and wipe down the area around where the toy was kept or used," Chusid says. "It's hand-to-mouth contact with lead that we're concerned about."

Ingesting lead can harm kids' development. "No amount of lead is good for children," says Dr. Binns. "If a child has been playing with a toy that has paint that is flaking or is in deteriorated condition, take the toy away and talk to a pediatrician about testing for lead."

Sadly, kids are exposed to lead in many ways. "About 25 percent of kids under 6 years of age live in a home where there is lead paint or lead in the soil around the home," Dr. Binns says.

### Tracking toy recalls

- Consumer Product Safety Commission: Visit <http://www.cpsc.gov>; sign up for a recall e-mail list at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.aspx>.
- Kids In Danger: Visit <http://www.kidsindanger.org>; sign up for e-mail alerts about recalls at [http://www.kidsindanger.org/forms/form\\_mailing\\_list.asp](http://www.kidsindanger.org/forms/form_mailing_list.asp).

**Source:** Binns, Helen, M.D., M.P.H., director, Lead Evaluation Clinic, Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago; chair, AAP Committee on Environmental Health; professor of pediatrics, Northwestern University. Interview.

**Source:** Chusid, Sarah, program director, Kids In Danger, Chicago. Interview.

**Source:** Starting Out Healthy/Summer 2008