

Toys and Vision

From the moment of birth, your child is learning to see. He or she progresses from the newborn's blurry world of light and dark to the school-age child's sophisticated ability to handle complex vision tasks. Toys, games and playtime activities help by stimulating this process of vision development.

Here is a list of toys and activities that can help your child develop or improve various vision skills.

Birth through 5 months:

- **Toys:** Sturdy cot mobiles and gyms; bright large rattles and rubber squeaky toys.
- **Activities:** Peek-a-boo; patty cake.

6 months through 8 months:

- **Toys:** Stuffed animals; floating bath toys.
- **Activities:** Hide and seek with toys.

9 months through 12 months:

- **Toys:** Sturdy cardboard books; take-apart toys; snap-lock beads; blocks; stacking/nesting toys.
- **Activities:** Roll a ball back and forth.

One-year olds:

- **Toys:** Bright balls; blocks; zippers; rocking horse; riding toys pushed with the feet.
- **Activities:** Throwing a ball.

Two-year olds:

- **Toys:** Pencils, markers, crayons; bean bag/ring toss games; peg hammering toys, sorting games; puzzles; blocks.
- **Activities:** Read to child; outdoor play; catch.

3 to 6 years:

- **Toys:** Building toys with large snap-together pieces; stringing beads; puzzles; pegboard crayons; finger paints; chalk; large balls; modeling clay; simple sewing cards; tricycle; follow-the-dot games; sticker books and games.
- **Activities:** Climbing, running; using a balance beam.

7 years and older:

- **Toys:** Bicycle; skipping ropes, pogo sticks; roller skates; different size and shape balls; target games; remote controlled toys; complex puzzles;
- **Activities:** Active sports; cycling.

When buying toys, remember to select those that are well-made and age appropriate. Provide proper eye safety equipment for older children and be certain that they wear protective eyewear when participating in eye hazardous sports and when using chemistry sets, tools or other items. Inexpensive homemade toys can be just as effective in helping children develop and improve their vision skills as expensive store bought ones.

HAZARDOUS TOYS

Certain toys pose a serious threat to children's vision; most injuries are preventable.

The following are guidelines for choosing safe toys for a child:

- Avoid poorly designed toys with sharp, pointed or rough edges that can cut or poke.
- Avoid poorly constructed toys with exposed nails or made of a brittle material that can shatter, sending splinters or sharp pieces into a child's eyes.
- Choose toy brooms, mops, sweepers and push toys with sticks that have rounded edges.
- Select toys appropriate to the child's age. Children under two should not have toys with stick handles. Those under six should not play with darts, arrows, catapults, other missile-throwing games or toys that eject missiles. Even those with suction cup tips can be unsafe in their hands.
- Teach older children the proper way to play with darts, arrows, catapults and other missile-throwing toys and supervise their play.
- Require older children and teens to wear safety goggles when playing or working with chemistry sets, some hobby kits, workshop tools, rifles and pellet guns. These safety goggles can be purchased at hardware, hobby and department stores.
- Be certain children have and wear the proper goggles when using minibikes, skate boards and roller skates.