

Reporting product concerns can keep children safe

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Pediatricians often are the first to observe the effects of emerging product hazards on children. Just as they report poison ingestions, adverse medication reactions and immunization side effects, they also can report product safety concerns.

Toys with magnets pose serious risks if swallowed. Unfortunately, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals recently overturned the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) ban on high-powered magnets, meaning these products can be sold again and endanger children.

Other products that pose risks if swallowed include those with poorly secured button batteries or small parts. The dangers don't stop there. Self-balancing scooters/hoverboards can catch fire, and dressers can tip over onto small children. Some products pose less obvious risks, like Orbeez, a gelatinous bead that expands in water and has led to permanent hearing loss when lodged in the ear.



Nearly 9 million children and teenagers from birth to age 19 are treated in emergency departments every year for unintentional injuries, and more than 9,000 die as a result of their injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Physicians, consumers and parents can report products that cause unreasonable risks of injury or death to SaferProducts.gov, the CPSC's public product safety information database.

Since 2008, there have been reports on only 11 button battery, 29 small magnet, 99 small toy part, 45 self-balancing scooter/hoverboard and six Orbeez concerns, despite thousands of children who have been affected by these products. Failing to report an unsafe product is a missed opportunity to advocate for patient safety. Pediatricians who see these incidents firsthand can make reporting concerns part of their mission.

Because the SaferProducts.gov database consists of reports from the public, pediatricians' reports can help improve the quality of the information in the database. This, in turn, can improve the data on which the CPSC bases its decisions.

To file a report, go to www.SaferProducts.gov and click Report An Unsafe Product. A report takes about five to 10 minutes to complete and includes product and incident details, information on individuals involved and recall details. Photos of the product, injuries or damage to property can be uploaded. Product manufacturers receive a copy of the report and can respond; all comments then are published at SaferProducts.gov.

Pediatricians and parents also can use SaferProducts.gov to confirm the safety of toys, cribs and other household items by clicking on the Search Recalls & Reports tab or on links under Browse These Popular Categories that include babies and kids; sports and recreation; home; toys; fire and carbon monoxide; and metals in consumer products.

Reports also are accepted through the CPSC telephone hotline: 800-638-2772; by fax to 855-221-6466 or via mail to Consumer Product Safety Commission; Attn: Clearinghouse; 4330 East West Highway; Bethesda, MD 20814-4408. Reports are processed like those submitted online and added to the online database if deemed suitable for publication.

Dr. Jarvis is a member of the AAP Section on Emergency Medicine and past intern in the AAP Department of Federal Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Resources

- [CPSC website](#)
- [AAP News Health Alerts](#)
- [Information for parents on the HealthyChildren website](#)
- [Information from AAP Bright Futures](#)

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