

Consumer Product Safety Alert

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207

CPSC Warns Consumers of Suffocation Danger Associated with Children's Balloons



The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns parents and guardians of young children about the suffocation hazard presented by uninflated toy balloons and pieces of broken balloons.

Of all children's products, balloons are the leading cause of suffocation death, according to CPSC injury data. Since 1973, more than 110 children have died as a result of suffocation involving uninflated balloons or pieces of balloons. Most of the victims were under six years of age, but the CPSC does know of several older children who have suffocated on balloons.

Accidents involving balloons tend to occur in two ways. Some children have sucked uninflated balloons into their mouths, often while attempting to inflate them. This can occur when a child who is blowing up the balloon inhales or takes a breath to prepare for the next blow, and draws the balloon back into the mouth and throat. Some deaths may have resulted when children swallowed uninflated balloons they were sucking or chewing on. The CPSC knows of one case in which a child was chewing on an uninflated balloon when she fell from a swing. The child hit the ground and, in a reflex action, inhaled sharply. She suffocated on the balloon.

The second kind of accident involves balloon pieces. Children have drawn pieces of broken balloons that they were playing with into their throats. If a balloon breaks and is not discarded, for example, some children may continue to play with it, chewing on pieces of the balloon or attempting to stretch it across their mouths and suck or blow bubbles in it. These balloon pieces are easily sucked into the throat and lungs. Balloons mold to the throat and lungs and can completely block breathing.

Because of the danger of suffocation, the CPSC recommends that parents and guardians do not allow children under the age of eight to play with uninflated balloons without supervision. The CPSC does not believe that a completely inflated balloon presents a hazard to young children. If the balloon breaks, however, CPSC recommends that parents immediately collect the pieces of the broken balloon and dispose of them out of the reach of young children.

⚠ WARNING

CHOKING HAZARD—Children under eight yrs. can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Adult supervision required.

**Keep uninflated balloons from children.
Discard broken balloons at once.**