



CPSC Safety Alert

Water Beads: A Danger to Young Children & Can Be Deadly if Swallowed

CPSC has heard heartbreaking stories from parents whose children ingested water beads and suffered severe consequences, including grave internal injuries, lifelong health impacts and death.

What are Water Beads?



Water beads look harmless – almost like candy – but can be deadly to babies and small children if ingested; and can lead to internal injuries and even death if left undetected.

Water beads, often sold as toys, in craft kits, as sensory tools for children with developmental disabilities or for

agricultural use, are small, water-absorbing, often colorful balls of super absorbent polymer and can **grow 100X their original size when exposed to water.**

Parents & Caregivers Need to Know: How do Water Beads work?



X-ray showing water beads in a child's intestines. Water beads are associated with thousands' of emergency-department visits every year.

Dry water beads can be the size of a pinhead, making them nearly undetectable if dropped on the floor or spilled in a playroom.

Ingested water beads can continue to grow inside the body. This can cause severe discomfort, vomiting, dehydration, intestinal blockages and life-threatening injuries, and surgery may be required to remove the water beads.

Water beads inserted into ears can damage ear structures, causing hearing loss and require surgery.

What is the warning?

CPSC urges parents and caregivers to remove these products from **any environment with small children** (3 years old and younger). CPSC also urges childcare centers, camps, and schools to avoid these products entirely. If you suspect your child has swallowed a water bead or inserted a water bead into their ear or nose, seek medical treatment right away.

Safety Tips:

- The only way to mitigate the hazard associated with water beads is to remove them from any environment where small children (3 years old and younger) may live or visit.
- Do not allow children to play with water beads unsupervised.
- Water beads can easily scatter, roll, and become lost in the home and can be ingested in the dehydrated state.
- Store water beads in a secure container and location where **young** children cannot easily access them.

In Case of Emergency:

- Call National Poison Help Line at **800-222-1222**, 24 hours a day.
- Visit CPSC's **Water Beads Safety Education Page:** [bit.ly/44RyFEJ](https://www.cpsc.gov/44RyFEJ)
- Report any dangerous product or a product-related injury & experiences with water beads on [SaferProducts.gov](https://www.saferproducts.gov).

'From 2016–2022, an estimated 7,800 water bead injuries were treated in hospital emergency departments, and CPSC is aware of at least one death.

