(StatePoint) When buying gifts for children, don’t just buy whatever is on their wish list. Do some research first. That way, the gifts can be age-appropriate and safe.

Toy-related injuries are an all too common occurrence. In 2009, an estimated 250,100 children under age 15 were sent to the hospital for toy-related injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. And these injuries are on the rise.

“Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child,” says Dr. H. Garry Gardner, chair of the Council on Injury, Violence & Poison Prevention at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). “Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.”

The AAP is offering these tips to help parents make safe consumer choices for their children:

• Make sure the toy is specified for the age of your child. Government regulations on toy diameter and length will prevent your baby or toddler from choking. Never leave a baby unattended with toys and games containing small parts.

• Toys that plug into an electrical outlet are a no-no for the under 10 set. Prevent burns and electrical shocks by buying battery-operated toys for younger kids. Make sure that the battery is in a secured compartment that cannot be accessed by the child.

• Buttons, batteries, and magnets pose a serious health risk when swallowed, causing stomach and intestinal problems and possible death. Call your pediatrician or other health care provider immediately if your child swallows one of these items.

• Store toys in a designated location, such as on a shelf or in a toy chest, and keep older kids’ toys away from young children.

• Read instructions carefully on a toy before allowing your child to play with it.

• Don’t leave children unattended with balloons. Uninflated or broken balloons are a choking hazard for children under 8.

• Watch out for pull toys with strings more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

Of course, choosing safe toys is only half the battle. You also have to pick one they will like.

“When it comes to toys, and ultimately, learning, active play always wins out over passive entertainment like TV,” says Dr. Gardner.

For a baby, anything that is eye-catching or makes noise is perfect. For an older child, whether it’s a board game, a magazine subscription, or the latest Justin Bieber record, something that will sustain his or her interest will make a meaningful gift.

For more gift-giving ideas and safety tips, visit the AAP’s website for parents, www.healthychildren.org.

A little research can go a long way in making sure your holidays are happy and healthy.