

KEEPING KIDS SAFE:

Avoiding Hazards in Art and Hobby Supplies

Be Aware of Potential Hazards

Permanent felt-tip markers, rubber cement, spray fixatives, powdered clay, and instant paper mache are standard arts and crafts supplies found in many homes. All of these materials contain chemicals that are hazardous if inhaled, absorbed, or swallowed. Children are especially prone to mishandling, chewing, sucking, inhaling, or swallowing art materials and decorating their hands and faces with them. Children are particularly susceptible to hazardous effects from these chemicals due to their small body size. It takes less chemical to cause an adverse reaction in a child than in an adult.



Paints, glues, and felt tip markers are familiar art and craft materials, yet many of these products contain hazardous chemicals and may pose a health threat if used or stored improperly. Pollution Prevention begins at home. Awareness is the key to reducing toxicity in our lives, and in the lives of our children.

Safer Alternatives for Children's Art Supplies

Use This

liquid paints
glue stick, paste, wax
white glue
water-based markers
paint brush
water-based paints
pre-mixed clay
vegetable & plant dyes
homemade paper mache
cellophane & black paper
children's paints
Polaroid camera

Instead of this

powdered paints
rubber cement
solvent-based glue
permanent felt tip markers
aerosol spray paints
oil-based paints
powdered clay
fiber-reactive dyes
instant paper mache
stained glass & lead
artist paints
photographic chemicals

To Avoid

dust
toxic solvents
toxic solvents
toxic solvents
toxic solvents
toxic solvents
dust
toxic pigments
dust, asbestos
lead
toxic pigments
toxic chemicals

Get Creative...Safely!

When using art and hobby materials, proper ventilation is essential for preventing inhalation of vapors. Except when working with very small amounts of solvents or other materials, simply opening a window or door does *not* provide "adequate ventilation." You can stay safe by opening windows and turning on a fan, or, weather permitting, take your art projects outside. Ingestion of these products can be avoided by keeping materials in their original containers, and by close monitoring during use. Any direct contact of these products with the skin should be washed thoroughly to prevent contamination through absorption.

Make a Mark - Choose NonToxic

Avoid permanent felt-tip markers (may contain toxic solvents) or scented felt-tip markers which teach children bad habits about eating and sniffing art materials. Solvent-based markers and pens are immediately distinguishable by their strong smell when opened. Purchase nontoxic, water-based markers for your children. A good rule of thumb: if the label on a marker says "nontoxic" or *does not* say "permanent ink," the ink is probably water-based. Not only are water-based varieties safer to use, they are easier to remove from the wall!



WHAT'S IN A LABEL?

The best way to avoid exposure to hazardous chemicals is to **READ THE LABEL** and follow the directions. Most hazardous consumer products are required to provide identification of hazardous chemicals on their labels. This labeling system uses “signal words” which provide information on the product’s degree of toxicity. Signal words indicate only acute, or short-term hazards, not long-term chronic effects. Label warnings should be taken seriously. They exist because chemicals contained in these products can be hazardous when inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin. Read labels carefully and look for the following:

DANGER - extremely flammable, corrosive and/or highly toxic

POISON - highly toxic

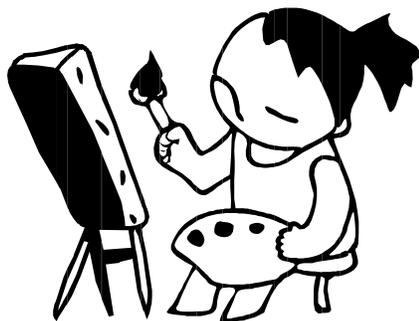
WARNING or CAUTION - less toxic

Other key phrases to look for include “HARMFUL IF SWALLOWED,” “AVOID SKIN CONTACT,” or “FLAMMABLE;” all of which indicate acute, or short-term hazards. Older products (e.g. an old bottle of rubber cement) or “professional” products (e.g. some paints, photographic solutions) may not carry a warning label. Keep children away from unlabeled products. Purchase nontoxic products whenever possible.

Two Favorites to Make at Home

Nontoxic Arts and Crafts

Encourage your children to express their artistic side - safely! Many nontoxic art materials are available commercially. Look for products labeled “nontoxic” or contact the manufacturer for safety information.



Stove Top Play-Dough

1 cup white flour
1/4 cup salt
2 Tbsp. cream of tartar
1 cup water
1 tsp. vegetable food coloring
1 Tbsp. oil

Mix flour, salt and cream of tartar in a medium pot. Add water, food coloring and oil. Cook and stir over medium heat 3-5 minutes. The mixture will look like a gloppy mess and you’ll be sure it’s not turning out, but it will. When it forms a ball in the center of the pot, turn out and knead on a lightly floured surface. Store in an air-tight container or plastic bag.

Homemade Finger Paint

1 cup all-purpose flour
4 cups cold water
Food coloring

In a large saucepan, combine the flour and one (1) cup cold water. Stir until smooth. Add an additional three (3) cups cold water. Cook and stir over medium heat until the mixture thickens and bubbles. Reduce heat and pour into three heat-proof bowls. Use food coloring to tint desired colors. Cover with plastic wrap and let stand at room temperature until cool. Spoon the paint on paper, and let your child create a masterpiece!

REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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