

...BB, Pellet, Paintball Guns Dangerous to Kids

Experts Say Don't Characterize Them as Toys

Written by Miranda Hitti

Nov. 1, 2004 -- BB, paintball, and pellet guns can cause injuries and death, even though they're not traditional firearms, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The report, which appears in the Nov. 5 issue of the journal *Pediatrics*, was written by pediatrics professor Danielle Laraque, MD, of New York's Mount Sinai School of Medicine and the AAP's Committee on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention.

In 2000, emergency rooms in the U.S. treated more than 21,000 injuries from air rifles and BB, paintball, and pellet guns, collectively called nonpowder guns. About a fourth of these were to the head and neck (excluding the [eye](#)); more than one in 10 injuries affected the [eye](#) .

Nonpowder guns use compressed air, not gunpowder, to launch projectiles. Yet these guns are almost as powerful as regular firearms, according to a news release from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Most nonpowder guns have a projectile velocity of between 350-450 feet per second, whereas regular firearms have a velocity of 750-1,450 feet per second.

Such guns can also cause fatal wounds. "Since the 1980s, the use of high-powered air rifles has been associated with approximately 4 deaths per year," write the researchers.

Of the 39 nonpowder gun-related deaths from 1990-2000, 32 were children younger than 15, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. They estimate that 3.2 million nonpowder guns are sold per year, sometimes at department stores and toy stores.

Children younger than 4 years account for 2% of nonpowder gun injuries. The most commonly injured age group was kids aged 5-14, who accounted for almost half (49%) of the injuries; 33% were aged 15-24.

Safety tips from the report include:

- Treat nonpowder guns as weapons, not toys.
- Always supervise the use of nonpowder guns.
- Injuries should be treated as promptly and seriously as those from firearms.
- Protective eye gear may help, but it doesn't eliminate eye injuries.

"Nonpowder guns pose a serious risk of injury, permanent disability, and even death," the researchers conclude.