Balloons Can Be Dangerous

Few people know that uninflated latex/rubber balloons or fragments of popped balloons are the leading cause of choking deaths among children younger than 6 years of age. Brightly colored latex balloons attract the attention of curious children. Young children like to suck or bite on balloons. In some cases, latex fragments were propelled into the child's mouth and throat when the balloon popped. When fragments of a popped balloon are within a child's reach, they may end up in the child's mouth to be inhaled or swallowed. When inhaled, a latex balloon fragment can stick to and cover the child's airway, blocking the breathing passage and suffocating the child. Because latex balloon fragments are sticky, they are hard to remove, even using the Heimlich maneuver.

In 1988, the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a safety alert on the dangers of suffocation associated with latex balloons. Toy Manufacturers of America have asked that packages of latex balloons display this warning.

Prevention is the best medicine.

You can substitute Mylar® balloons for latex ones for children under the age of 6 years. If, latex balloons are used, you should inflate them yourself and carefully supervise your child's play.

Because of the danger they present, latex balloons are never allowed in the hospital or clinics or at any hospital events that involve children. Latex gloves are never blown up as balloons or toys for patients.