

Health Canada warns of life-threatening risks posed by water beads to young children



Health Canada is warning parents and caregivers about the risks of water beads. These tiny beads, also known as jelly beads, hydro orbs, crystal soil, sensory beads or orb beads, are water-absorbing gel beads that can grow up to 1,500 times their size when placed in water. Water beads can be very harmful if swallowed or put in the ears or nose. If ingested, water beads can continue to grow inside the body leading to potentially life-threatening injuries, such as intestinal or bowel obstruction.

Water beads can be found in a wide range of products that may be accessible to children, such as toys, art kits, stress balls, foot baths, vase fillers, and gardening products. They are also sold in their dehydrated form in individual containers. They may be promoted to parents and caregivers of young children, specifically for use in sensory bins.

Water beads are typically brightly coloured. This may lead young children or adults with cognitive impairment to mistake them for candy. These beads are also small, slippery, and bouncy, allowing them to roll away from their initial location. In several incidents, children gained access to beads that had rolled to another area of the home and were overlooked during clean-up. In some reported cases, the beads had been purchased for, and used by, an older sibling, but a younger child was able to gain access to them. In other reported cases, young children gained access to water beads while at school or in childcare.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to exercise caution and follow these safety tips:

1. If water beads are placed in the nose or ear or you suspect that your child has ingested a water bead, seek medical attention.
2. Water beads should always be stored in an airtight container out of sight and reach of children, especially those under the age of five.
3. It is recommended that parents of children under five avoid having water beads in their household, even if intended for an older child or adult use.
4. If using water beads with children five and up, closely supervise their play.
5. After using water beads, thoroughly clean the surrounding area and clean up any beads that may have rolled away. Check under furniture, toys and in adjoining rooms for water beads that may have rolled away from their initial location.

For more information, please visit the Health Canada [website](#).