



# Guidelines for Art/Sensory Supplies

Prepared by the Health & Safety Specialists at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

To meet minimal safety standards, make sure all art/sensory materials state they are non-toxic **AND** conform to ASTM D-4236. To meet the highest safety standards, make sure all art/sensory materials state they are certified by the Art and Creative Materials Institute (ACMI) and have the “AP” (Approved Product) seal (see seal in the upper right corner). For additional information, see ACMI online at [www.acminet.org](http://www.acminet.org).

Along with using safe art/sensory supplies, supervision is very important when doing any type of art/sensory activity. Providers need to closely watch children to make sure that they are using equipment and supplies correctly and safely. It is also important for providers to consider each individual child’s development and maturity when choosing suitable art/sensory activities.

Be cautious when accepting donations unless the products are relatively new. The older the material, the more likely it is to contain harmful substances. All products should be in the original container/packaging, so you know the ingredients and the manufacturer’s information. If you do not have the original container/packaging or if you aren’t sure a product is safe, it is best to throw it away.

Some early childhood experts believe that food should not be used for art/sensory. It can give children a misleading message about the proper use of food. If you choose to use food, it is recommended not to present it as food. For example, put the Cool Whip in another container and present it as a material for art/sensory; do not point out that it is Cool Whip. Ensuring sanitary conditions is very important if food is used for art/sensory. The food should be handled in a sanitary manner, it should be safe to eat (stored properly and have current freshness date), and children’s hands should be washed, and tables sanitized in case the children do eat the food.

PRODUCTS to AVOID	SAFE to USE
Powdered clay, which is harmful to lungs and can get into children’s eyes.	Pre-mixed clay.
Adhesives not water-based, such as rubber cement or solvent-based glue.	White glue, which is the safest for children.
Glazes, paints, or finishes that contain lead.	Poster paints/water-based products.
Paints that require solvents such as turpentine, to clean brushes.	Water-based paints for easier, safer clean up.
Water beads can be harmful if swallowed. They can cause choking as well as swell in the GI system and cause a bowel obstruction. They can also swell if inserted into a child’s nose or ear. The materials in the water beads could also be harmful.	
Permanent markers that may contain toxic solvents.	Water-based markers. Washable markers better choice.
Instant paper mache using color-printed newspaper or magazines that may contain lead or harmful chemicals.	Newspaper (black ink only) and white paste.
Aerosol sprays. Can be harmful if sprayed into eyes or mouth or breathed into lungs.	Pump sprays.
Powdered tempera paints. Powdered paints can get into children’s lungs or eyes.	Pre-mixed tempera paint.
It is not recommended to use shaving cream with infants and toddlers. If shaving cream is used with older children, use a well-ventilated area due to fumes; special consideration should be given if using around children with allergies or asthma.	Foam paints
Uncooked/raw beans (ex. kidney, pinto, etc.) for art, shakers, or sensory tables. Raw beans are a choking hazard for young children. A raw bean stuck in a body opening can swell and be difficult to remove. Kidney beans are toxic if as few as 4 to 5 raw beans are eaten.	
It is not recommended to use glitter with infants/toddlers. If glitter is used with older children, it is important to be aware that glitter may cause an eye injury if children rub some into their eyes.	
Peanut butter or nuts for art projects with infants/toddlers or if there is a child allergic to peanuts.	Sun butter
Possible choking hazards such as small eyes, Styrofoam packing peanuts, foam pieces, beads, etc. with infants and toddlers. These items should only be used with children 3 years or older.	