

TV Products 4 Less invites you to try Floam for yourself

TV Products 4 Less, an online retailer, invites you to buy Floam for your kids this year. The space age product is the hottest item on the market this year.

Developed by EdiZONE, makers of such products as the injection-molded wheelchair, FLOAM is the latest must-have to hit the toy market. EdiZONE created FLOAM as a sidebar to their wheelchair project. Wheelchair-bound individuals are prone to “hot spots”—sores created by pressure resulting from body weight resting unmoving on a solid surface, compressing skin and tissue—and the most prominent product available for relief of that problem has been a heavy pad filled with a bladder containing polystyrene beads suspended in a viscous oil. The company developed the ultra-light fluid, FLOAM, as an alternative.

The product is licensed to the German company Otto Block. Other companies, however, have purchased rights to FLOAM for use in such varied consumer items as athletic shoes (Nike), and orthopedic support products (Johnson & Johnson). FLOAM is proving to be one of the most innovative new products of the late 1990's.

Enter the toy manufacturers. In 1997 and 1998 Hasbro obtained a license to produce FLOAM as a child's modeling material and marketed it under the product name Orf. According to the manufacturer the product is “the world's lightest-weight non-gas fluid”. It offers an intriguing tactile experience which is attractive to children. The micro beads are extremely cohesive, allowing the user to model the substance into various shapes. It also has an adhesive quality that allows it to be attached to any surface and removed with no residue. FLOAM can be modeled and covered with fabric to create soft sculptures and toys. The product is labeled as child-safe even if ingested.

The product has been widely marketed via television infomercials but is also available in stores and online. Hasbro has taken the product to Canada where it has been equally successful in attracting young shoppers.

This is not just a child's toy, however, as adult crafters are quickly discovering. Much easier to handle than Styrofoam beads, FLOAM has found a niche among sculptors who love its ease of use. Once the sculpture has been created with the FLOAM, covering it with fabric is a simple project—much simpler than the alternative of creating the fabric shape then filling it with loose beads. It is easy to predict that FLOAM will have a long marketing life. Where it will turn up next is up to the creativity of the additional corporate entities whose advanced technology teams will be gearing up for a new generation of cushioning devices.

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