

Home Safe Home

Protect your children with these home safety tips

More than 2.5 million children are killed or injured each year by hazards at home, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Here are some tips to help childproof your house and keep kids safe.

Around the House

- Use covers over electrical outlets so children can't be electrocuted from sticking items in an outlet. Be sure the covers fit tightly and are large enough children cannot remove them or choke on them if they did pry them off.
- Put latches and/or locks on cabinets and drawers throughout the house, especially in areas where you store cleaning supplies, medicines, knives and sharp utensils, or guns and other weapons.
- Store all poisonous items high above a child's reach.
- Keep the phone numbers of your local Poison Control Center, doctor and hospital near your phone. In a poison emergency, call 800-222-1222.
- Use safety gates at the bottom and top of stairs so children will not fall. Also place gates in doorways of rooms that may contain dangerous items.
- Place window guards throughout the house and use safety netting on balconies. Guards that allow for escape in emergencies must be difficult for very young children to open. Window screens should not be used as guards. One window in each room should be useable as a fire escape.
- Window blind cords should be removed, cut or secured by a clip on the window frame to avoid children strangling themselves on the string loops.
- Place edge bumpers on all areas with sharp edges, such as tables.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors throughout the house, especially outside bedrooms. Check the detectors once a month to make sure they work. If they use batteries, change them at least once a year.
- Place a fire extinguisher in all levels of your home, including the kitchen and garage, and make sure it is inspected as instructed on the tag.
- Keep plants above a child's reach since some flowers and leaves can be poisonous, or may cause choking.
- Make sure your car keys are kept out of reach so they can't lock themselves in the car or trunk.
- Keep cigarettes, matches and lighters out of a child's reach.

In the Kitchen

- When cooking, make sure pot handles face the back of the stove or use the back burners.
- Place protective covers on stove knobs so children can't turn it on.
- Unplug all countertop appliances, such as toasters and coffee makers after using them.

- Remove chairs and stools from counters and the stove so children won't climb on top of them.
- Keep your dishwasher locked so children cannot grab sharp knives or other objects inside.

In the Bathroom

- Set your hot water heater to 120° F so children can't burn themselves. Equipment can be fixed to faucets that will stop water from coming out too hot.
- Place a cushion on the bathtub faucet so kids cannot fall against it.
- Use a lock on the toilet lid so young children cannot open the lid and fall in.
- Do not leave children alone when they are taking a bath. Children can drown in just a few inches of water.
- Use non-slip rugs and mats in the bathroom so children won't fall.
- Make sure you can unlock the bathroom door from the outside should your child lock himself in.

In the Baby's Room

- If you have a mobile above the baby's crib, take it down when your baby can stand so she doesn't risk get injured in the strings.
- When changing a baby's clothes or diaper, always use the safety strap on the changing table so they can't fall. Never leave a baby alone on a changing table, even if they have the safety strap on.
- Place a baby's crib away from draperies, electrical cords and windows.
- Place all babies under 1 year of age on their backs to sleep.
- Use a mattress that fits tightly against the sides of the crib and use sheets that fit tightly over the mattress.
- Keep a diaper pail on a high shelf or in a locked cabinet so babies can't grab the dirty diapers.

Outside

- Use gates and high door locks to keep children away from a swimming pool or place alarms on doors and gates.
- Place all lawn-care equipment and chemicals in a locked shed or storage room. This also includes paint, paint thinners, gasoline and bug repellent.
- Do not leave children alone around any type of outside cooking grill.

Resources

- Keep Kids Healthy. *Childproofing the house*. Retrieved May 17, 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.keepkidshealthy.com/WELCOME/safety/childproofing_the_house.html
- Royal Baby Safety Corp. Home safety tips. Retrieved May 17, 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.babysafe.com/tips.htm
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. *Childproofing your home-12 safety devices to protect your children*. Retrieved May 17, 2006 from the World Wide Web: www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/grand/12steps/12steps.html

The purpose of this patient education handout is to further explain or remind you about a medical condition. This handout is a general guide only. If you have specific questions, be sure to discuss them with your healthcare provider. This handout may be reproduced for distribution to patients.

— Compiled by Pamela Tarapchak, editor at ADVANCE.