



Keeping Kids Safe at Home

Have you ever looked at your home through your child's eyes? Little ones who crawl on the floor have quite a different view than we do. So do toddlers. To make your home safe, you need to see it through their eyes!

Those tempting electrical outlets and cords:

Outlets are at the perfect height for crawlers. One of their favorite games is putting objects into openings like those two little slots! Be sure to cover all unused outlets with safety plugs. Electrical wires can be attractive, too. Use cord holders to attach them to the walls (rather than staples). If your electronics have several cords, bundle them up in a plastic cord holder that can then be attached to the wall. To prevent a fire hazard, never run electrical cords under your rugs.



Speaking of fire, smoke detectors should be installed in hallways outside bedrooms, in common living areas and near the furnace; at least one on every floor of the house. Likewise, carbon monoxide detectors are recommended near bedrooms and the furnace or wood stove.

For more information on detectors, see: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pyfff/smkalarm.html> and http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/co/fswy17.shtm

Furniture: Friend or foe?

"Coffee-table injuries" are common in children who are learning to walk. Sharp-edged furniture that bruises our shins can cause more serious injuries to little eyes, foreheads, and teeth. Glass topped tables are a popular choice these days. Be sure the edges are rounded and they are sturdy enough to survive the crash of a toddler's fire truck.

Bunk beds are a common source of injury in children. Toddlers love to climb and should be closely supervised in rooms that have bunk beds. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children under the age of 6 years should not be allowed to sleep on a top bunk.

Chemicals and cleaners:

Where do you store your household cleaners? Under the sink is a common choice – yet this is the perfect height for little children. Colorful containers may look like food containers to a child. Never store extra cleaning supplies or toxic substances in pop bottles, milk jugs, or other food containers. Keep all of these substances up high or behind a door with a child safety lock.

Medications:

Grandma's heart medication may look like candy to a toddler. And let's face it, cough syrup is made to look yummy and taste good. Be sure caps are secure and these items are kept out of your child's reach. Remind visitors that their medications (as well as their nail file, razor, hairspray, etc.) should not be left on the bedside table or window sill where curious little hands can find them.

Kitchen concerns:

The kitchen can be a dangerous place for little kids. When you are cooking, turn the handles of pots to the side, rather than out over the floor. Many children have been burned when trying to peek into pots to see what is cooking. Keep chairs and stools away from the stove for the same reason.

Keep knives, scissors and other sharp implements out of sight in a drawer that has a childproof latch. The same holds true for garbage bags and plastic grocery bags. Kids love to put things on (or over) their heads.



Everyone loves those cute refrigerator magnets. Keep in mind that alphabet and number magnets cease to be fun and educational when swallowed. Magnets simply are not safe for tots who put everything in their mouths. Keep them out of reach, unless you can supervise.

Families spend a lot of time in their kitchens. A toy box or drawer with safe play items in your kitchen may help keep your crawler or toddler amused and out of harm's way.

Lastly, keep a working fire extinguisher in your kitchen. Read the directions **before** you need to use it.

Structural hazards (stairs, windows and doors):

If your home has stairs, inside or out, consider a safety gate. Most children learn to go up the stairs before they can come safely down. Make sure they are not tempted to "go it alone". Remove tripping hazards and install sturdy hand rails by staircases.

It is lovely to open windows and doors when the weather is warm. Take extra care to be sure your screens fit snugly and securely. Window guards or safety bars may be necessary to insure that your tot cannot fall through. Be sure your outside doors lock in a way that keeps your child from unlocking them and escaping into the neighborhood, unsupervised.

Window blinds with long, dangling cords or loops have no place in a child's home. Children have suffocated after becoming entangled in such cords.

Window sills, specifically in homes built before 1978, can be a problem because of the use of lead paint. Lead tastes sweet and window sills are "mouth height" for most toddlers. If lead dust is present, it can be inhaled. Either way, the result can be lead poisoning. Lead damages the brain, the bones, and many other body parts when it is eaten or inhaled.

Universal lead testing of all children at ages one and two is recommended by New York State. Homeowners with older homes can reduce their children's risk of lead exposure by damp mopping and dusting the floors and window sills regularly. For more information on lead poisoning prevention, see:

http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/parents_caregivers.htm

Water hazards:

Swimming pools provide endless hours of summer fun but obviously can be very dangerous to small children. Extreme care needs to be taken to insure that little ones cannot **ever** access the pool area without you. This applies not only to full-sized pools, but inflatable and "kiddy pools", as well. The soft sides of inflatable pools are particularly dangerous as children can lean into them and topple head first into the water. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends swimming lessons for all children and CPR training for all parents. For more from the AAP, see:

<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/may2410studies.htm#drowning>

Indoor water sources can also be a problem. Babies have drowned after toppling into toilet bowls. Toddlers have drowned in as little as three inches of bath water. Never leave a small child alone in the bathroom.

Flora and fauna:

A less obvious danger is houseplants. To check your plants out, visit <http://www.blankees.com/house/plants/poisonous.htm>. You'll be surprised at some common plants that are poisonous to children as well as pets.

Speaking of pets, we have all seen babies' eyes light up when the family pet passes by. Injuries from Fluffy or Fido are common. Keep in mind that even small bites and scratches can become infected. More serious injuries can leave



permanent scars. In addition to injury, reptiles, amphibians and birds carry a variety of diseases that can make young children sick. Always supervise your baby or toddler around pets. Remember to wash your little one's hands frequently with soap and water.



Is it possible to completely child-proof your home? Probably not, but many injuries can be prevented simply by looking at the world through the eyes of a curious child. With a little effort we can provide environments in which our children can safely learn and grow.

For more information about keeping your child safe see:
<http://www.aap.org/>