

Childproofing and Preventing Household Accidents

Household injuries are one of the top reasons kids under age 3 visit the ER and nearly 70% of the children who die from unintentional injuries at home are 4 years old and under. Young kids have the highest risk of being injured at home because that's where they spend most of their time.

Supervision is the best way to prevent injuries, in the home and out, but even the most watchful parents can't keep kids completely out of harm's way every second of the day.

Avoiding potential hazards

To avoid entrapment and strangulation hazards:

- Don't dress young kids in clothes with drawstrings, which are a strangulation hazard if caught on play equipment and furniture.
- Don't put necklaces or headbands on a baby.
- Remove your infant's bib before naptime and bedtime.
- Don't leave a child alone in a stroller, because babies can slide down and trap their head.
- Don't tie a pacifier around your baby's neck or attach it to your baby's clothing with a ribbon or piece of string.

Bedrooms

- Don't hang diaper bags or purses on cribs, because a baby can become entangled in the straps or strings.
- Never put a crib, child's bed or furniture near window blinds or drapery.
- Don't use cribs with cutouts in the headboard or footboard.
- Keep mobiles out of reach and remove from cribs by 5 months or when the child is able to push to hands and knees. Cut strings or ribbons off other crib toys.
- Don't use crib bumpers.

Doors and windows

- Place doorknob covers on doors so that your toddler won't be able to leave the house.
- Place decorative markers on all glass doors so they won't be mistaken for open doors in which your child could walk into.
- Make sure all sliding doors have childproof locks.
- Install a finger-pinch guard on doors.
- Remove the rubber tips from all door stops or install one-piece door stops.
- Install safety bars or window guards on upper-story windows.
- Tie all window blind and drapery cords, or cut the ends and attach safety tassels.

- Fit the inner cords of blinds with cord stops.
- Use window stops to keep the window from closing all the way and slamming down on little fingers.

Furniture

- Secure bookshelves and other furniture with wall brackets so they can't be tipped over.
- Place protective padding on corners of coffee tables, furniture and countertops that have sharp edges.
- Remove the lid from toy chests or make sure they have safety hinges to prevent them from closing.
- Check for baby equipment recalls.
- Check for stops on all removable drawers to prevent them from falling out.

Stairways

- Mount safety gates at the top and bottom of every stairway.
- Clear stairways of tripping hazards, such as loose carpeting or toys.
- Secure rugs to the floors or fit with anti-slip pads underneath to prevent falls.
- Place a guard on banisters and railings if your child can fit through the rails.
- Make sure railings and banisters are secure.

Bathrooms

- Never leave a baby or young child unattended in the bathroom, especially while bathing — even if the child appears to be well propped in a safety tub or bath ring.
- Put away all hair dryers and other electrical appliances to avoid the risk of electrocution.
- Reduce the risk of scalding by turning the water heater thermostat down to 120°F (49°C) and by always testing the water with your wrist or elbow before placing your child in the bath.

Kitchen

- Put knives, forks, scissors and other sharp tools in a drawer with a childproof latch.
- Install a dishwasher lock so kids can't open it while it's running and can't reach breakable dishes, knives and other dangerous objects.
- Install a stove lock and have knob protectors placed on the stove knobs.
- Position chairs and stepstools away from the stove.

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- When cooking, turn all pot handles on the stove inward or place on back burners where kids can't reach them.
- Store glass objects and appliances with sharp blades out of reach.
- Store the garbage can behind a cabinet door with a childproof latch.
- Unplug all appliances when not in use, with cords out of reach.
- Store all vitamin or medicine bottles tightly closed and in a high cabinet far from reach.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked cabinet.
- Keep the cabinet under the sink free of cleaning supplies, bug sprays, dishwasher detergent and dishwashing liquids. Keep these supplies out of the reach of children.
- Store any bottles containing alcohol out of reach.
- Keep all plastic garbage bags and sandwich bags out of reach.
- Keep any cords or wires from wall telephones or cable TV out of reach.
- Keep refrigerator magnets and other small objects out of reach.
- Install childproof latches on all cabinet doors.
- Make sure there is a working fire extinguisher and all family members know how to use it.
- Your child's highchair should have a safety belt with a strap between the legs.

Be prepared

Accidents will still happen, so it's important to be prepared. It's wise to:

1. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the age-appropriate Heimlich maneuver.
2. Keep the following near the home phone (for yourself and caregivers) and saved in your cell phone:
 - poison-control number: 1-800-222-1222
 - doctor's number
 - your work and cell phone numbers
 - neighbor's or nearby relative's number (if you need someone to watch other kids in case of an emergency)
3. Make a first-aid kit and keep emergency instructions inside.
4. Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.