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[Healthy Children](#) > [Safety & Prevention](#) > [At Home](#) > Home Safety: Here's How

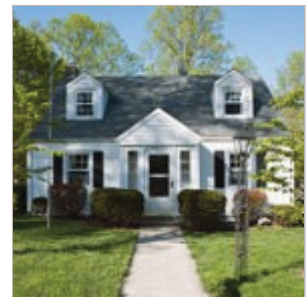
Safety & Prevention

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Home Safety: Here's How

Certain safety rules and preventive actions apply to every room. The following safeguards against commonplace household dangers will protect not only your small child, but your entire family.

- Install smoke detectors throughout your home, at least one on every level and outside bedrooms. Check them monthly to be sure they are working. It is best to use smoke detectors with long-life batteries, but if these are not available, change the batteries annually on a date you will remember. Develop a fire escape plan and practice it so you'll be prepared if an emergency does occur.
- Put safety plugs that are not a choking hazard in all unused electrical outlets so your child can't stick her finger or a toy into the holes. If your child won't stay away from outlets, block access to them with furniture. Keep electrical cords out of reach and sight.
- To prevent slipping, carpet your stairs where possible. Be sure the carpet is firmly tacked down at the edges. When your child is just learning to crawl and walk, install safety gates at both top and bottom of stairs. Avoid accordion style gates, which can trap an arm or a neck.
- Certain houseplants may be harmful. Your regional Poison Help Line will have a list or description of plants to avoid. You may want to forego house plants for a while or, at the very least, keep all house plants out of reach.
- Check your floors constantly for small objects that a child might swallow, such as coins, buttons, beads, pins, and screws. This is particularly important if someone in the household has a hobby that involves small items, or if there are older children who have small items.
- If you have hardwood floors, don't let your child run around in stocking feet. Socks make slippery floors even more dangerous.
- Attach cords for window blinds and drapes to floor mounts that hold them taut, or wrap these cords around wall brackets to keep them out of reach. Use safety stop devices on the cords. Cords with loops should be cut and equipped with safety tassels. Children can strangle on them if they are left loose.
- Pay attention to the doors between rooms. Glass doors are particularly dangerous, because a child may run into them, so fasten them open if you can. Swinging doors can knock a small child down, and folding doors can pinch little fingers, so if you have either, consider removing them until your child is old enough to understand how they work.
- Check your home for furniture pieces with hard edges and sharp corners that could injure your child if she fell against them. (Coffee tables are a particular hazard.) If possible, move this furniture out of traffic areas, particularly when your child is learning to walk. You also can buy cushioned corner- and edge-protectors that stick onto the furniture.
- Test the stability of large pieces of furniture, such as floor lamps, bookshelves, and television stands. Put floor lamps behind other furniture and anchor bookcases and TV stands to the wall. Deaths and injuries can occur when children climb onto, fall against, or pull themselves up on large pieces of furniture.
- Keep computers out of reach so that your child cannot pull them over on herself. Cords should be out of sight and reach.



- Open windows from the top if possible. If you must open them from the bottom, install operable window guards that only an adult or older child can open from the inside. Never put chairs, sofas, low tables, or anything else a child might climb on in front of a window. Doing so gives her access to the window and creates an opportunity for a serious fall.
- Never leave plastic bags lying around the house, and don't store children's clothes or toys in them. Dry-cleaning bags are particularly dangerous. Knot them before you throw them away so that it's impossible for your child to crawl into them or pull them over her head.
- Think about the potential hazard of anything you put into the trash. Any trash container into which dangerous items will go—for example, spoiled food, discarded razor blades, or batteries—should have a child-resistant cover or be kept away and out of a child's reach. To prevent burns, check your heat sources. Fireplaces, woodstoves, and kerosene heaters should be screened so that your child can't get near them. Check electric baseboard heaters, radiators, and even vents from hot-air furnaces to see how hot they get when the heat is on. They, too, may need to be screened.
- A firearm should not be kept in the home or environment of a child. If you must keep a firearm in the house, keep it unloaded and locked up. Lock ammunition in a separate location. If your child plays in other homes, ask if guns are present there, and if so, how they are stored.
- Alcohol can be very toxic to a young child. Keep all alcoholic beverages in a locked cabinet and remember to empty any unfinished drinks immediately.

Last Updated 4/30/2012

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