

# Childproofing Your Home

One of the most important steps you can take to protect the health and life of your child is to childproof your home.

The following is a quick checklist for childproofing areas in your house. Remember, however, that every child and home is different. Check your home carefully. Never leave your baby or young child unattended.

## Kitchen

- Turn handles of all pots and pans to the back of the stove so your child can't reach them. Use the back burners of the stove when possible. The best way to avoid accidents is to keep your baby in his playpen or high chair while you cook. Do not allow children to play on the kitchen floor while you are cooking or baking.
- Keep fire extinguishers in the kitchen and near any fireplaces. Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Avoid using tablecloths that can be pulled down.
- Keep appliances and their cords away from the edges of counters or table tops. All cords should be coiled up and tied.
- Keep chairs and step stools away from counters and stoves.
- Put safety latches on drawers and cabinets. If you have room, you can put lightweight pots, pans, large plastic bowls, and spoons in a bottom cupboard for your child to play with.
- Store cleaning products and all other poisonous chemicals in a high cupboard out of a child's reach. Make sure it has a lock or safety latch.
- Keep knives and sharp objects in a drawer or cupboard out of your child's reach.
- Vacuum up broken glass right away and then use a wet paper towel to clean up small slivers of the glass on your floor.
- Keep hot drinks out of reach of your child. When handling hot liquids or foods, check to see where your child is before you pick up the tea kettle or pan. You do not want to trip and spill anything hot on your child.
- Keep aluminum foil, plastic bags, and plastic wrap out of reach of children.

## Bathroom

- Keep all drugs in a locked cabinet out of children's reach. Medicines are a common cause of childhood poisoning. Return all medicines to the proper container and put them in the cabinet after you use them. Make sure that all medicines have child safety caps.
- Keep shampoo, cosmetics, and soap out of your child's reach.
- Keep hairdryers and curling irons unplugged and out of reach of children. Keep all electric appliances away from water to avoid electric shock. Have an

electrician install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) to replace outlets near water. This helps prevent electric shocks.

- Lower the hot water heater temperature to 120°F (49°C) to prevent burns. Always check water temperature before putting your child into bath water or under a faucet.
- Dispose of pills, razor blades, and other dangerous items in a covered wastebasket out of children's reach. Children like to explore wastebaskets.
- Use lid locks or keep the bathroom door closed to keep children safe. Put a hook on the outside of the bathroom door or a safety cover designed to prevent children from opening doorknobs. Always leave the toilet lid closed.
- Use plastic or paper cups and containers in the bathroom so there is less chance of broken glass.

## **Furniture**

- Don't allow children to jump or stand on furniture. This helps prevent falls.
- Put corner and edge bumpers on sharp edges of furniture such as coffee tables, end tables, and your fireplace hearth.
- Put away all delicate, breakable, and valuable items from tables and shelves until your child is 4 to 5 years old.
- Move computers and electronics out of reach of young children. Heavy objects such as TVs, lamps, or stereo equipment, should be pushed back from the edge of furniture, fastened to the wall, or kept out of reach so children don't accidentally knock them over when trying to crawl or stand.
- Keep all dresser drawers firmly closed. This prevents children from climbing on drawers, and protects little fingers from being crushed.
- Remove or tighten all loose knobs on cabinets or furniture.
- Be aware of recliners and hideaway beds. Children's hands or heads may get trapped as the chair or bed closes.
- Fasten bookcases to the wall with a wall anchor so your child can't pull the piece of furniture over on himself.
- Empty all ice chests, buckets, or other liquid containers right away to prevent drowning.
- Never leave your infant alone in a carrier, high chair or changing table.
- Store ointments, creams, safety pins and all other baby changing items out of reach.
- Do not use baby powders or talcum powder. Babies can choke on the dust.
- Keep plants out of children's reach. Cover the top of a large plant with a nylon screen to prevent a child from playing in or eating the soil.
- Be sure the liquor cabinet is locked.
- Hang mobiles and dangling toys out of the baby's reach. The string should be no more than 12 inches long. Remove the mobile as soon as your baby can stand.

## **Floors, Carpets, and Rugs**

- Avoid shag carpeting and thick rugs because pins, buttons, and scraps can get lost in the fabric.
- Check the floor area daily for small objects such as pins or small bits of food such as popcorn and peanuts that a baby could choke on
- Do not put scatter rugs near the top of a staircase.
- Put non-skid backing on scatter rugs to hold them in place.

## **Outlets, Cords, and Appliances**

- Cover unused electrical outlets with outlet covers to prevent a child from sticking things into the outlet. Be sure to look for outlets behind furniture and cover them also.
- Make sure electrical plugs fit tightly into wall outlets.
- Avoid using extension cords unless absolutely necessary. Keep all cords completely out of children's reach by tacking them under pieces of furniture, taping them to walls, or wrapping them around cord shorteners or legs of heavy tables.
- Replace burned out light bulbs immediately. Never leave a lamp without a bulb.
- Make sure portable heaters are well ventilated and protected by safety guards. Unplug them when not in use.
- Install a smoke or heat detector and a carbon monoxide detector on each floor in the house and in every bedroom. Test the alarms monthly and replace batteries every 6 months.
- Cover hot radiators or make them hard for a child to reach by placing furniture in front of them.

## **Nursery and Bedrooms**

- Never put your baby to sleep in an adult-size bed or waterbed.
- Make sure that crib slats are not wider than 2 and 3/8 inches apart. Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's crib. They can cause choking or suffocation.
- Use a night light in the nursery.
- Consider getting a room intercom to help monitor activities in the nursery and other bedrooms.
- For bedrooms shared by two young children, set the crib mattress at its lowest point and keep the crib side up so the older child cannot reach the baby or try to lift him or her out. Remove any furniture the older child can use to climb into the crib.
- Use non-locking doorknobs to reduce any chance of children locking themselves in the room.
- Never place a crib or child's bed near a window.

- Store toys on shelves or in plastic boxes in another part of the house. An older child's toys can be dangerous to a younger child. A young child may choke on small parts, and many toys for older children have sharp edges.
- Make sure that lids on toy chests cannot fall shut and that the lid is not so heavy that it could trap your child inside.
- Bunk beds are not recommended and many models have been recalled. Only children over 6 years of age should be allowed to sleep in a bunk bed. Make sure there are top railings the length of both sides of the top bed

## **Gates, Stairs, and Doors**

Most safety gates are between 24 and 32 inches tall and can be adjusted to spaces about 27 to 42 inches wide. Some can fit up to 20 feet wide. Safety gates with hardware that fastens to the wall are safer than gates held against the wall by pressure.

- Use gates fastened with hardware to block off stairs, forbidden rooms, and areas or spaces where safety and security is most important. Carefully read the directions and make sure the gate is secure when the job is done.
- You can also use a safety gate in the doorway of an older child's room to protect the baby from the older child's toys.
- Check the space between posts on a stair rail. The gap should be less than 4 inches wide to avoid the chance of a child's head getting caught. If the gap is too wide, install a fine, heavy netting or Plexiglas along the railing.
- Keep stairs free of clutter or anything someone could trip over.
- Use toddler-proof locks on doors and screens. Special guards are available to keep patio doors locked. Keep doors closed and outside doors locked at all times, even when you are at home.
- Install safety glass in large windows and patio doors. They are shatter-proof if a child runs or falls into them.
- Put decals on glass doors or window to prevent your child from bumping into them.
- Replace door stoppers that have rubber caps. The caps can be removed and swallowed by young children.
- Keep folding doors open fully or closed completely so that they can't pinch a child's fingers.
- Cover door knobs to prevent doors being opened by a child.

## **Windows**

- Keep all cords from drapes or blinds out of reach or use a cord wind-up device. Contact the Window Covering Safety Council at <http://www.windowcoverings.org> or call 1-800-506-4636 to get a free kit with safety tassels, tie-down devices, and installation instructions. Consider replacing blinds with a pull cord with cordless blinds (available at most home improvement stores).
- Hang curtains out of crawling reach so they can't be pulled down.

- Don't leave any furniture or objects near a window that a child could climb up on.
- Install window guards or netting to protect your child from falling out of a window. Regular window screens will not protect your child. If you have sash windows, get window locks that will only allow the window to open to a safe height.

## Outside Areas, Garages, and Workshops

- Store tools and lawn equipment out of reach of young children. Cover sharp edges. Unplug electrical tools when not in use.
- Check your yard for poisonous plants. The Poison Help Line (1-800-222-1222) can give you a list of poisonous plants common to your area.
- Keep paints, pesticides, and other chemicals out of children's reach. Label properly and dispose of unused chemicals. Keep garbage cans tightly closed.
- Check swing sets and outdoor furniture for rust, splinters, and cracks that could pinch or trap a child's fingers.
- Watch children and never leave them alone around water, including wading pools, swimming pools, spas or hot tubs, ponds, lakes, streams, or any other open water. If a child is in the water, an adult should also be in the water and close enough to reach and grab the child if needed.
- Never use a power mower or work on a vehicle with a small child present. The mower may throw sticks or stones with enough force to injure children.
- Never store an unused or broken freezer or refrigerator where a child could climb inside.
- Lock any car parked in the garage or driveway so a child cannot get inside.
- Use only a garage opener that reverses when it touches any object. Check the door by closing it on a heavy cardboard box to be sure it works. Keep garage door openers locked up or in the glove compartment.

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