



Did you know that your chances of getting hurt at home are much higher than they are at work or school? The leading causes of death in the home are falls, drowning, fires, poisoning, suffocation, choking, and guns. The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family. This section will help you ask questions to find out if your home is a safe place to live and how to make it even safer.

Very young children and older adults are the most likely to get hurt at home. Keep people's age in mind when thinking about how to keep your home safe.

Falls kill more people than any other type of accident beside car crashes. Most falls happen at home. Most people trip and fall at floor level, not going up or down stairs. Falls can be worse for adults than for children. They fall faster and harder than children. Their bones are weaker, so they break more easily too.

In the U.S., more than one million children age five and under are poisoned each year.

Young children are curious and get into everyday things that can hurt or even kill them. Over half of them become sick or die from eating or drinking common items like medicine, makeup, and plants. Children like to play with these things because they can look or smell good.

For over a decade, the number of people who die in fires has gone down. Yet fires are still one of the main causes of death in the home. Older adults are most at risk because they may not be able to respond to an alarm or get out of a building quickly.

Choking and suffocation also cause many deaths in the home. When a person chokes, something, like a piece of food, has gotten stuck in their throat and stopped their breathing. Suffocation happens when a person's nose, mouth, or throat is blocked and they can't breathe. If someone stops breathing long enough they can suffer brain damage or die. Children under age four and older adults are the most likely to die from choking. People can choke on food or something not meant to be eaten at all, like a button or a coin. Sheets, blankets, and plastic bags can suffocate people who get caught in them.

Drowning kills more than 1,000 children ages 14 and under each year. For every child who drowns, another 20 children go to the hospital or emergency room because they almost drowned.

It takes just a few easy, fairly low-cost steps to keep your children safe from many everyday dangers. The questions in this fact sheet will help you find safety problems at home. It will also provide you with ideas about what to do. Remember, making your home safer for everybody may mean taking more than one step.

Questions to Ask: Slips, Trips and Falls

- Do you keep your floors--especially hallways and stairs--free of things that might make people slip or trip?
- Are your stairs in good shape?
- Are there throw rugs in your home?
- Do you know the safe way to carry big loads?
- Is your home well lighted?

Is Your Home Poison-Proof?

- To poison-proof your home, look through each room through the eyes of a child. Is anything that can hurt your child within her or his reach?
- Any room can have something in it that can hurt a child: the kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, living room, basement, garage, or laundry room. Most poisonous products are where people keep cleaning supplies.

Fires and Burns

- Does your house or apartment have at least one smoke alarm?
- Where do you store matches and lighters?
- Have you talked about fire safety with your children?
- Do you have a fire exit plan in case your home catches fire?
- Do you use space heaters safely?

Choking

- Do you keep a close eye on young children at meals and at playtime?
- Young children like to put things in their mouths. Balloons, toys, and toy parts that are small enough to fit into a child's mouth may cause choking. You also may not be able to get them out if they get stuck.
- Do you pick out toys that are right for your child's age?

Watch Out Around

- Do you have a pool or does your child go swimming a lot?
- Pools are very dangerous for infants and toddlers. A toddler who falls in may die or get brain damage. Toddlers love to play in the water. But they don't know that even shallow water can hurt or kill them. Children need to be watched around pools at all times.
- Does the pool you use have a fence around it?
- Do you ever leave toys in the pool?
- Do you ever visit lakes, beaches, or rivers?
- Do you watch your young children in the bathtub?

Action Steps

Prevent Slips, Trips & Falls

- Keep your floors clear of anything that may cause tripping. Pick up hazards such as toys, shoes and magazines.
- Clean up spills right away so people won't slip.
- Repair any stairs that are cracked or worn.
- If there are rugs in your home, use non-skid mats and throw rugs.
- When carrying large or heavy loads, make sure you can see where you're going. Ask for help if you need it.
- Keep your home well lit so you can see where you're walking at night.
- Other tips
 1. Don't use makeshift ladders like chairs or tables.
 2. Wear shoes with non-skid soles and put young children in non-skid socks.
 3. Teach your children not to run indoors or jump down stairs.
 4. Teach your children and other family members about the dangers of falling and how to stay safe.

Poison-Proof Your Home

Use this guide to poison-proof your home room by room:

Make sure any medicine is stored in child-safe packaging. But remember, child safe doesn't mean child-*proof*, so keep medicine out of reach.

Kitchen. Your kitchen is one of the most dangerous places for a child. Drain openers, detergents, oven cleaners, and other cleaners can hurt you and your children. Put safety latches on all cabinets and drawers with harmful products. Even better, put them in a place that children can't reach. Children often get into dangerous products while someone is

using them. If you can, keep your children out of the room while you're cleaning.

Bathroom. Things in your medicine chest--like medicine, makeup, mouthwash, first aid supplies, deodorants and cleaners can hurt children. Keep these out of their reach. Put a safety latch on your medicine chest.

Bedroom. Keep medicine, medications, perfumes, makeup, and cigarettes out of children's reach.

Living Room. Things to look for in the living room are: liquor, cigarettes, furniture polish, lamp oil, and some plants. Keep these out of reach.

Garage, Basement and Laundry Room. These are some of the most dangerous places in your home. There are lots of chemicals and poisons that can hurt or kill a child in them: bleach, anti-freeze, gasoline, kerosene, car polishes, car batteries, paints, paint removers, mothballs, bug spray, road salt, and more. It's safest to keep children out of these places all together.

Do you know what to do if someone in your home gets poisoned? If you think someone has been poisoned, call your local Poison Control Center right away at 1-800-222-1222. Keep this number next to *all* of your telephones. Make sure you know:

- Brand-name of product
- Type of product
- Contents as listed on label
- About how much the person ate or drank
- How the person came in contact with the poison (mouth, skin, etc)
- How long the person was in contact with the poison
- The person's age and weight
- How you tried to help the person, if you did

Prevent Fires and Burns

Put in a smoke alarm on every floor of your home in or near every sleeping area. This will cut in half the chances of someone dying in a fire.

Playing with fire--matches, lighters, stoves or heaters--is the leading cause of fire-related death for children five and under. Storing matches, lighters, and other heat sources in a safe place like a locked drawer will help keep your children from playing with them. Don't let your children play near the stove or grill either.

Teach your children how to prevent fires, and what to do if there *is* a fire. It can make the difference between life and death. Talk about fire safety with your children. Your local fire department can help.

Plan and practice a fire escape route with your family. Do this at night and with the lights off so you'll be ready if there is a fire. Take special steps for getting children, the elderly, and people who may not be able to save themselves out of the building.

Space heaters such as electric or kerosene heaters cause most burns at home. Keep them out of doorways, halls, or other busy areas. Also, keep them at least three feet from curtains, bedding, or other things that could catch fire. Teach children that heaters will burn. Even better, put up a barrier to keep children and pets away.

Prevent Choking and Suffocation

Everyday foods can cause choking. Hot dogs, nuts, popcorn, and hard candy can easily get stuck in a small child's throat. Don't let your young children eat them. Even drinks, like formula, milk, or juice can make babies choke if they drink them lying down, especially from a bottle. Make sure children drink sitting up.

Keep a close eye on the young children in your home. Don't let your children play with balloons. Other household items that can cause problems are coins, marbles, and buttons, so keep your floor picked up. Finally, don't let children play near cars or old appliances. They can suffocate and die if they become trapped in a car trunk or old refrigerator.

Young children can get tangled up and suffocate in curtains, window blind cords, and extension cords. Plastic bags and covers are also dangerous. Don't tie toys or pacifiers to children's clothes. Very small children should not wear jewelry around their necks.

Toys with small parts or long cords may strangle or cause a child under the age of four to choke. Read a toy's package to make sure it's right for your child.

Watch Out Around Water

If you have or use a pool --

- Watch children under the age of 12 at all times around pools.
- All pools, hot tubs, and spas should have a fence at least five feet high, with a self-closing, self-latching gate around them. It's important that this fence be one that children *cannot* climb. *Don't* think of your home as part of the fence, because children can open doors to get to a pool.
- Take all toys out of the pool area after swimming so children won't go back into the water and play by themselves.
- Children should wear life jackets or vests while on docks or at beaches or rivers. Never let a child swim alone!
- Never leave a young child alone in the bathtub. Children can drown in only a couple inches of water.

Other Safety Concerns

- Older children and adults should learn first aid and CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) so they can help if someone gets hurt. Your local Red Cross offers classes.
- Never let children ride on equipment such as lawn tractors. They may get hurt if they fall off.
- Get safety gear like helmets and kneepads for children riding bicycles, in-line skates, ATVs, scooters, and skateboards. Set a good example by wearing safety gear yourself.
- Store guns safely -- unloaded and locked up.

For More Information

For information on product recalls:
The Consumer Products Safety Commission
1-800-638-2772 or www.cpsc.gov

National SAFE KIDS Campaign
(202) 662-0600 or www.safekids.org
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Ste. 1000, Washington DC 20004

The American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

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