

Making your house safe for children



Parents worry endlessly about how to protect their children from stranger abduction and violence, but many overlook one of the biggest threats to their children's safety and wellbeing - their own home. Experts say that children between the ages of 1 and 4 are more likely to be killed by fire, burns, drowning, choking, poisoning, or falls than by a stranger's violence.

Preventing burns

Children are at risk of getting burnt when there is heat present anywhere in the house and the child is not supervised.

In the kitchen make sure that cooking handles are not turned inwards away from the reach of young children. Limit the range top cooking to the burners position to the rear of the stove top.

NEVER leave a young child or infant unattended whenever there is hot, scalding, running water filling a bathtub. It is easy for a child to reach into the water or fall into the bathtub and be scalded and/or drown in the water. Always check the temperature of the water. Many cases of deaths or injuries from burns come from neglect or negligence from the adult who left a child unattended in the bathroom.

Another common causes of burns in children is from electrical appliances, for example, the iron. NEVER leave a hot iron unattended on the ironing board when there is a child playing nearby. This will be a potential scenario for a medical emergency when the child pulls at the cord and the hot iron falls onto the child.

Electrical appliances

Always unplug electrical appliances when not in use and wind the electrical cord neatly around the appliance. Don't leave the cord or extension cords in a messy bundle because this will be a potential danger to the child who will play with the cord or chew at it. Place protective covers on all electrical outlets.

The website Kidslife.com has good safety advice, such as:

" Electrical outlets fascinate children and represent one of the greatest threats to their personal safety. One shock from a house- hold outlet is enough to kill a young child. The utmost precaution must be taken to secure electrical outlets. However, parents must take special precautions to get outlet covers that totally restrict a child from having access to the outlet itself. Many commercially available products are not only inadequate, they present another danger to children; they are small objects that can be removed from the outlet and swallowed. The best type of outlet cover has a trap-door mechanism that closes when a plug is removed and cannot be penetrated by a child. Remember, once a child removes the plug, he or she must not be able to have access to the outlet. If he or she does, then this must be childproofed immediately."

Know where your fuse box is located, know how to use the circuit breaker so you can switch off the power in case of an electrical related accident.

Preventing poisoning

Accidental poisoning by ingestion of medicines is the most common cause of poisoning in Australia, accounting for 70% of all cases.

Four out of five cases of swallowed poisons occur in children aged less than five years.

TAKE CARE WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS

Household cleaners such as detergents, floor polish, disinfectants, Napisan, all-purpose cleaners, dishwashing and laundry powders, shoe polish.

Pesticides and garden products such as rat poisons, fly and insect sprays, snail bait, fertilisers, glues, car-cleaning products, cat litters.

All medical products including liquid medicines, vitamin pills and herbal remedies.

All beauty and personal items such as nail polishes and nail polish removers, perfumes, spray and roll-on deodorants, mouthwashes (which often contain alcohol), essential oils (even tea-tree oil and eucalyptus) and incense.

Poisons Information Centre 13 11 26

- Purchase products in child resistant containers wherever possible, and keep them in child proof cupboards or in high places (where children cannot reach them, even if they climb).
- Use medicines and chemicals safely, and return them to locked cupboards or high places after use.
- Use safer cleaners, such as vinegar and bicarbonate of soda (which is a good all-round cleaner).

- Ensure all products are kept stored in their original containers and are not transferred to old lemonade bottles etc (such as paint thinner).
- Keep all paint products out of sight, in a locked shed or garage at all times.
- Be extra vigilant when you are staying in unfamiliar surroundings (such as on holiday or visiting friends), or when you have people to stay (who might bring medicines with them etc).
- Measure medicine doses carefully - even paracetamol can be dangerous in large amounts.

First aid for poisoning

IF SWALLOWED:

- DO NOT attempt to make your child vomit - this can be as harmful as when the poison was first ingested.
- DO try and get your child to drink some water; wash any poisons on face and hands away.
- Take the poisonous substance to the emergency department with you, or identify it while on the phone to the poisons information centre.

IF INHALED:

- Get your child into fresh air; open doors and windows if safe; avoid breathing fumes.
- Call the poisons information centre and identify the substance.
- If the person stops breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and call an ambulance 000.

EYES & SKIN:

- Flood the eyes or skin with water for 15 minutes (and call either the poisons information centre or an ambulance, being sure to identify the poison).





First aid management of seizures

- Stay calm and check the child for medical identification.
- Cushion the child's head, and help them to be comfortable and free from harm.
- Do not place anything in the child's mouth, and do not restrain him.
- Stay close by, reassure the child, and time the seizure as you may be asked for this information by the doctor or emergency services later.
- Once the seizure finishes, roll the child onto his side into the recovery position, which will keep the airway clear.
- Treat any injuries and assess whether the child requires an ambulance or not. The child may be sleepy and confused after a seizure. Stay close by and reassure them.

Information you need to give to the emergency services : your location and contact number; the nature of the problem and what has happened; the age of the person needing help; whether the person is conscious and breathing; and whether they have had more than one fit.

Products to make your house safer

Below is a list of products that can be used to protect your child's safety throughout the house. All of these products can be easily purchased and installed following simple instructions.

- Electrical outlet covers - protects the child from accessing the socket with an electric conducting object. Use the automatic sliding kind only.

- Door stoppers, catchers and strips - protects the child's fingers from being slammed in the door.
- Doorknob covers - this prevents the child from entering potentially dangerous areas.
- Cupboard locks - as mentioned above, these products secure the doors so that those little fingers cannot access dangerous goods. These products can be used throughout the house and come in many forms.
- Oven locks - these protect children from opening ovens which may cause serious scalding.
- Refrigerator latch - to keep those hands from pulling things out of the fridge.
- Tap covers - protects the child from scalding their body with hot water or a hot tap and spout in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry

Stair and hallway security gates They are Easy to install by either pressure mounting or with screws

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The most effective way to ensure your baby's safety is to take a baby's-eye view of your home. Get down on your hands and knees and see how things look from down there.

What's within reach? What looks tempting? Where would you go if you could crawl, toddle, or walk?

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Safe house checklist

Do you:

- Keep dangerous items such as knives, breakables, and heavy pans, locked up or out of reach?
- Are all poisons, medicines, toxic and cleaning products always out of reach in the house, garage and shed? And what about the glove box in the car, and your handbag?
- Do you use safety gates, door locks, and knob covers to control access to unsafe areas?
- Do you have sturdy locks or latches on cupboards and drawers that house unsafe items?
- Keep rubbish bins in inaccessible cupboards or use ones with child-resistant covers?

Here are more safety tips:

Cover or block access to hot radiators and floor heaters. Keep small fingers out of videos with a video lock or cover.

Don't use tablecloths or placemats, children can pull them and what's on them down.

Cut off or tie up dangling cords on curtains and blinds. All cords, strings or ties present a very real risk of strangulation, and you need to be constantly aware of this.

Use colourful stickers to show children that glass sliding doors are there.

Install window locks so windows can't be opened far enough for your child to climb out. Don't put furniture that children could climb on near windows, stairwells, or kitchen benches.

Want more information?

Emergency

Police, Fire, Ambulance: 000

Police attendance: 131 444

Domestic violence: 1800 800 098

Poisons Information Line: 13 11 26

Healthdirect

Phone 1300 022 222, 24 hours To speak to a nurse.

www.healthdirect.gov.au

Parentline NSW

Phone 1300 1300 52

Advice on child health and parenting.

Kids Helpline

Phone 1800 551 800, 24 hours Telephone and web

counselling for young people aged 5–25 years.

www.kidshelpline.com.au

Raising Children Network

Information on raising children

www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.families.nsw.gov.au

Various resources to help parents at any stage in life.

Domestic Violence Line: 1800 656 463

Local Services

Goonellabah Child & Family Health Service

Phone 02 6625 0111

9am – 4:30pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

Lismore Community Health - Child and Family

Phone 02 6620 7687

8am – 5:00pm, Monday to Friday to make an appointment.

Family Support Network

Family Workers can offer you practical and emotional support to enhance & strengthen your parenting & family relationships.

Phone 02 6621 2489

www.fsn.org.au

Refer to Service Listing for contact details of other local services