

Childproofing Your Home – A Checklist for Parents

Handout 1

There is no golden rule to prevent injuries, but you can decrease the risks significantly by following the ideas listed below. Use it as a checklist, and find out how well you are doing with safety in your home. Go over the checklist from time to time to maintain safety.

Falls and Falling Objects

- Position tables, chairs, shelving and other furniture so they cannot be tipped over easily.
- Screen windows, and make sure they open from the top or have a barricade in front.
- Provide railings on stairs, porches, decks and lofts.
- Equip steps with tread mats or carpet and a handrail that children can reach.
- Secure carpets and rugs so that children cannot trip.
- Use safety gates with straight top edges to block access to stairs and other dangerous areas.
- Do not use infant walkers, especially near stairs.
- Use only high chairs that have a wide base so they cannot tip easily.
- Use high chairs with a waist strap.
- Never leave infants in infant carriers that are left on a high surface such as a table, counter or chair.
- Keep sides of playpens and cribs raised always. Make sure that crib sides cover at least three-fourths of a child's height.
- Keep electric cords to lamps and appliances up and out of the way.
- Keep unused rooms, basement, attic, etc., locked when children are in your home.
- Make sure all doors to rooms and closets can be unlocked from both sides.
- Place heavy items (like an iron or skillet) out of a child's reach.
- Teach children safe and unsafe areas for climbing. Shelves or counters are not for climbing.
- Wipe spills from floors immediately.
- If your garage door has an electric opener, make sure that it has a safety feature that causes the door to go back up when it touches an object or person in the way.

Poison

- Keep trash covered and out of the reach of children.
- Keep all cigarettes, cigarette butts and all tobacco products away from children. Tobacco is poisonous when eaten.
- Provide a non-smoking environment for children.
- Keep perfumes and cosmetics and other drug products in high cabinets with safety latches or locks.
- Do not store alcoholic beverages, cleaning supplies, cosmetics, pet supplies, medicines, vitamins, gasoline, paint thinner, fertilizer, weed killer and other poisons in areas used by children.

- Store hazardous products in their original containers. Do not transfer them to used food or beverage containers or to a food storage area.
- Keep purses out of the reach of children.
- Do not use insect poisons, rat poisons or weed killers when children are present. Dispose of leftover poisons immediately.
- Follow directions and caution warnings on drugs, cosmetics and chemicals.
- Make sure that walls, furniture and toys have lead-free paint only.
- Check to make sure that there is no peeling paint on walls or furniture.
- Have your home checked for radon – an odorless gas that seeps through the soil into homes. Inexpensive test kits can be purchased at most hardware stores.
- Check toys and materials to make sure they contain nontoxic, nonpoisonous materials.
- Flush old medicines down the toilet.
- Store medicines immediately after use in a high, locked or otherwise child-inaccessible space.
- Teach children not to taste things like berries, roots, plants, pills or tablets without your permission.
- Label all house plants and remove poisonous plants.
- Remove all outdoor plants that might have poisonous parts.

Emergency Phone: 1-800-222-1222

ARKANSAS POISON AND DRUG INFORMATION CENTER

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Choking and Suffocation

- Make sure toys have no small parts that could be broken off and swallowed.
- Use balloons only with close adult supervision. Pop and dispose of balloon pieces immediately after use.
- Do not allow children under age three to play with any toy that is less than 1 1/4 inch in diameter (about the size of a half dollar).
- Make sure that mesh-sided playpens have holes no larger than 1/4 of an inch.
- Remove hanging crib toys when infants are able to pull themselves up.
- Remove plastic wrap on crib mattresses.
- Put infants to sleep in a crib or a playpen and NEVER on an adult bed, waterbed, thick rug, pillow, or bean bag. Place infants on their backs.
- Teach children to chew their food well and to eat only when sitting down.
- Do not store clothing in dry cleaning bags that are accessible to children.
- Store all plastic bags, including small bread sacks, out of reach of children.
- Remove doors or lids from toy chests. Install a slow-closing hinge, and make sure the chest has ventilation holes.
- Do not allow children to use or play with objects that have long cords. This includes pacifiers with

strings attached, long telephone cords, old jewelry, necklaces and long scarves.

- Tie hanging cords on draperies or blinds up high and out of reach.
- Use only safety gates that have a straight-topped edge and a rigid mesh screen. Do not use old accordion-style safety gates.
- Make sure that crib mattresses fit tightly with no more than two finger widths in the gap between mattress and crib frame.

Burns, Electrical Shock or Fire

- Do not heat bottles and baby food in the microwave.
- Stir and check all microwave-heated foods for “hot spots” before serving to children.
- Set the water heater in your home to a temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit or less.
- Cover unused electrical outlets with safety caps.
- Block electrical outlets when possible with some type of barrier or furniture.
- Keep electrical cords for appliances (irons, toasters, radios, etc.) out of reach.
- Make sure children cannot get to the back of a television set.
- Place stereos, VCRs, computers and other electrical equipment up high and out of reach.
- Avoid running cords under rugs, over hooks or through door openings.
- Store lighters and matches out of reach.
- Use screens or barriers around fireplaces, wood stoves, heaters, radiators, hot water pipes, furnaces or steam-producing vaporizers.
- Never leave children alone in a room with an open fire, heater or hot stove.
- Replace used and worn electrical cords or equipment.
- Keep pots and pans on the back side of the stove where children can't reach them. Turn handles to the back.
- Install smoke detectors and test them every month.
- Keep an approved fire extinguisher in a secure area.
- Store combustible materials away from furnaces, stoves or water heaters.
- Firearms should be unloaded and locked away. Ammunition should be locked in a separate place.

Drowning

- Never leave children alone in the bathtub or swimming pool or with water play.
- Keep toilet lids closed.
- Empty mop buckets, ice chests or pails of water immediately after use. (Children can drown in 2 or 3 inches of water).
- Do not allow children to play near ponds, storm sewers or excavations.
- Protect, cover and childproof wells and cisterns.

Cuts and Punctures

- Keep all sharp objects out of reach (cooking knives, silverware, cooking utensils, scissors, razors, plastic wrap boxes, glass bottles or drinking glasses, knitting needles).
- Do not allow children to play with sharp tools or around lawn mowers and power saws.
- Mark glass windows and doors with decals or tape to increase visibility. If possible, install safety glass.

Outdoor Safety

- Cover sand box when not in use.
- If an outdoor play area is near a street, parking lot, pond, well or railroad track, fence the area.
- Keep gates closed and install childproof latches.
- Check play area routinely for trash, sharp branches, tools, lawn equipment or animal feces.
- Regularly inspect outdoor play equipment for broken, worn or missing parts. Remove, repair or replace items immediately.
- Teach children not to play near the street and to ask for help if toys roll into the street or driveway.
- Keep outdoor play equipment at least 6 feet away from pavement, fences, trees, buildings or other play equipment.
- Make sure surface areas under play equipment are impact absorbing (such as sand, pea gravel, or wood chips). Uncompressed, this material should be a minimum of 12 inches for equipment up to 8 feet high. It should extend at least 6 feet beyond the edge of stationary equipment.
- Cover all protruding bolts or screws with plastic safety caps.
- Close hooks completely on swings.
- Lock storage sheds, barns and garages.
- Require children to use helmets with bicycles, skateboards or rollerblades.

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