

Childproofing Your Home

After the first few months, injuries are the leading cause of death in infants and children. Many serious injuries happen at home. Some simple steps can greatly reduce the risk of injuries to your baby or toddler, including poisoning, burns, falls, and drowning. The most important step is to make sure your infant or toddler is appropriately supervised at all times.

What is childproofing?

Babies and toddlers are naturally curious. They love to explore their world, especially as they become able to crawl and climb. It's important to be aware of the possible hazards in your home and to remove or eliminate as many of these dangers as you can. Childproofing means going through each room, removing dangerous objects, and taking the simple steps needed to reduce the risk of injury.

How can I childproof my home?

- **Prevent poisoning.** All medicines, household cleaners, chemicals, laundry products, and other poisonous substances should be placed out of reach. Place these items up high, preferably where children can't even see them.
 - Buy medicines in child-resistant packages. Avoid putting medicines or poisons into other containers that are not child-resistant or could be confused for something to eat or drink. Use safety latches or locks for further protection.
- **Put safety latches or locks on cabinets and drawers.** Simple, inexpensive devices can keep babies and toddlers from opening cabinets and drawers. Safety latches are designed to be easily opened by adults but not by babies and tots. Put latches on cabinets in the bathroom, kitchen, basement, garage—any room your child can get into.
- **Prevent fire and burns.** Make sure smoke detectors are installed in your home. Check batteries regularly.
 - Keep hot objects out of reach, for example, pots and pans on the stovetop. Don't leave the stove burners on. Don't use cooking utensils, curling irons, or other appliances with long electrical cords; children can pull these items down.
 - Use approved flame-retardant children's sleepwear.
- **Cover electrical outlets.** Simple devices are available to prevent children from putting their fingers or small objects into electrical outlets.
- **Keep toys and other small objects out of reach.** For babies and toddlers under age 3, remove all objects small

enough to be swallowed (for example, small toys, coins, watch batteries).

- **Install safety gates.** Install safety gates to keep your child from entering unsafe areas, especially staircases.
- **Avoid walkers.** They don't improve walking skills but do increase the risk of injuries by letting toddlers get into places they shouldn't (for example, near stairways and hot stoves).
- **Prevent bath hazards.** Many serious injuries to babies and toddlers occur at bath time. Prevent burns by making sure the bath water is not too hot. If possible, set the temperature of your water heater to around 120°F (49°C). Another option is to install antiscald devices on your sink and bath. Always test water temperature before placing your baby in the bath.
 - **Never leave your baby or toddler alone in the bath, even for a minute!** Drowning can occur in the time it takes to answer a phone call. Cordless phones are a good option for homes with infants or young children.
- Swimming pools are another drowning hazard. Just like in the bath, don't leave your child alone in or near a pool. For home pools, lock doors to make sure your child can't enter the pool area alone.
- **Secure windows and doors.** Simple devices are available to keep windows from opening wide enough to allow children to fall out. Other types of window guards or safety nets may be installed as well. Young children may be strangled by the cords on window blinds. Cut the cords or install special safety devices. Lock doors or install doorknob covers to keep your child from getting into unsafe areas.
- **Keep your child safe in the car.** Use a car seat or booster seat appropriate for your child's age. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about child passenger safety.
 - Never leave your child alone in the car. On warm days, the inside of a car can become dangerously hot within minutes.

Are there any other steps I can take?

- Recheck your home every few months to make sure it is safe. This is especially important as your child reaches new milestones, for example, crawling or climbing.
- When your child is old enough to understand, teach him or her about safety precautions.
- As your child grows, emphasize important safety messages about playing with matches, watching out for cars, and so forth.

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Where can I get more information?

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission provides information on product safety, including recalls of defective

products on the Internet at *www.cpsc.gov* or *www.recalls.gov*.