



Living Safely™ Tip Sheet

Making Your Home Kid-Safer

Introduction

Although the holidays are a traditional time for great family get-togethers, they can also bring kids into a home that is not “child proofed”. Here are some tips to keep your home kid-safe this holiday season.

In the Kitchen

To adults, the kitchen is merely a place where food is prepared. Many kids, however, treat the kitchen – especially an *unfamiliar* kitchen — as a place of wonderment and potential exploration. New sights, smells and maybe even new tastes await! But there’s a lot of hidden dangers in any kitchen.

- Stoves, obviously, are the most dangerous kitchen area for kids. Curious children can pull down pots of hot food or liquids if pot handles aren’t pointed away from the edge. Steam or electric kettles can cause serious burns and other injuries. If you have a step

stool for reaching high places, you can bet unattended kids will find it, use it and possibly get into trouble. Remember that under-the-oven drawer (known to some as the pot drawer) can pose hazards, too. Small kids can climb into this area and get very badly burned or cut.

- Knives and other sharp objects should be put away safely for the duration of the kids’ visit. Metal corkscrews, sardine can keys, wire – anything that can be shoved into an electrical outlet – can be easily found in most kitchens under normal circumstances. Make sure things are well away before the little ones arrive.
- Refrigerators are heavy and can pose serious crushing hazards if pulled onto a child. They are also dangerous if kids are able to open the doors, climb in and shut themselves inside. Old fridges (the ones with the lever-type handles) are especially dangerous and may cause death due to asphyxiation. Kids can also use the fridge shelves as ladder steps and then fall if they lose their grip. Alternatively, they can pull themselves up to the counter where other dangers lurk.
- The same climbing danger goes for kitchen drawers: smart kids with an engineering bent can figure out that kitchen drawers can be pulled out in a tiered fashion to create a gradual laddering effect. This lets them climb up and easily get to the kitchen counter.
- Under the counter is another place that kids can find mischief. Many households store paints, oils, drain cleaners, oven cleaners, bleach and other worrisome chemicals. If you don’t have child-resistant latches installed on the lower kitchen cupboards already, just wire them shut for the day.

About Living Safely™

We help people around the world lead safer, healthier and happier lives.

We accomplish these goals by providing knowledgeable health advice, late-breaking medical news, useful health tips, pre-emergency information, preventative safety products as well as research and services including corporate seminars and public lectures dealing with safe travel, safe living and general health. Living Safely: Nutrition is one in a series of these initiatives.

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In the Living Room

- Always have at least one adult (and preferably, two adults) supervising kids. One adult can perform any first aid as necessary, and another can summon help if needed.
- Keep in mind that candy, peanuts, even small pieces of cheese, fruit or vegetables can present a choking hazard, especially to those under three or four. Make sure trays of sweets are well out of young children's hands.
- Don't forget that an increasing number of kids are allergic to peanuts and tree nuts these days, often violently. When in doubt, leave the peanuts out of the treat mix and serve other things such as pretzels or crackers. Parents will do well to remember to bring their own EpiPen® or Twinject® devices if peanut (or other) allergies are already known.
- Christmas trees, tinsel, lights and other temporary installed holiday accessories can be tantalizing attractions for young kids. While pets can be sure to chew on live electrical cords, kids can often burn themselves on lights. Hospital emergency rooms are crammed with kids who mysteriously eat tinsel or push tree lights into places where lights should not be pushed.
- Candles: more house fires are caused by unattended candles than by just about anything else in the house. Make sure any lit candles are safe, secure and away from flammable drapes, papers or picture frames. Kids should not be able to reach a candle. Young children do not understand the dangers involved with fire and hot wax.

- Matches, lighters, fire starters and other items around the fireplace can also be dangerous. While we're at it, fireplace pokers can be sharp and heavy; not things you want around the kids. Be careful.
- * Every year, kids manage to strangle themselves in curtain loops, blind pulls and other hanging cords. What may be normal, second nature conveniences around the house may represent real dangers to small, inquisitive children.
- Electrical cords and power bars seem to hold special interest for many children. Make sure any unused outlet is safely covered.

In the Bedroom

- Drugs: If you have prescription drugs in the house, you most likely keep them in the bedroom, bathroom or kitchen. Be careful that all drugs are hidden away where inquisitive hands (and mouths) can't find them. Remember, even seemingly innocuous drugs such as Aspirin, birth control pills or antacids can cause serious injury (or worse) to a small child. Just because drugs are stored in nightstands away from prying eyes, doesn't mean kids will respect your privacy. Many kids are poisoned every year by nosing around inside "private" drawers and sampling what they find.
- Bottles: Remember that your drugs may not be in "child resistant" bottles, especially if you have Arthritis or other grip strength issues. While this is fine for you, your houseguests may assume that all drugs in the house are properly and safely bottled for kids. This may not be so, especially if you use a multi-day pill dosage container. To kids, drugs can look like candies and kids want to imitate adult behavior.



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In the Bathroom

- Another dangerous place in the house can be the bathroom. Beware that kids can find all the sharp objects, lotions and potions and other innocuous items we all use to primp and preen. Like the kitchen, pay special care to any under-the-counter items that may be swallowed, poured or thrown about the room.
- Scissors, clippers, sharp combs, hair irons, dryers and the like can pose cutting and electrocution hazards.
- Shower curtains, drains, and of course, the infamous bathtubs (where both drownings and slips can easily occur without supervision) should be watched. Kids can drown in as little as two or three inches of water, and it doesn't take too long to fill any tub to that depth.
- Houses with older people can often keep their water far hotter than houses that have kids living there. It may be a good idea to turn down the temperature of the hot water heater a few hours before everyone arrives for the day or weekend.

In the Garage and Basement

- There are many, many things that can tempt a young child in a garage, shed or basement. Electrical tools, garden accessories, saws, hoses, circuit breakers and many other hazards mean kids should be supervised in a safe area at all times.

Updates?

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