HEALTHY HOUSE
CHILD SAFETY
(http://health.discovery.com)

High Places

Hazards: Stairs, Windows, Changing tables, High chairs, Beds

Risks: Childhood falls, most of which occur at home, account for an estimated two million visits to hospital emergency rooms each year. The most serious injuries are from falls down stairs.

Prevention:

- Lock doors leading to basement stairs or any dangerous areas of your house.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways.
- Avoid accordion-style gates with openings large enough for a child's head. The safest gates have vertical slats no more than two and three-eighths inches apart.
- Never leave an infant alone on a high surface (including changing tables or beds). Keep at least one hand on your baby at all times.
- Buy high chairs with such safety features as a wide base, locking tray, restraining belt or safety straps. Always use straps on highchairs and strollers.
- Baby walkers lead to thousands of child injuries per year -- don't use them.
- Make sure all rugs have a nonskid backing; don't overwax wood floors; use rubber mats or slip-resistant stickers in bathroom floors and in bathtubs.
- Install window guards and locks on windows above the first floor. (Screens are not a substitute for window guards.)
- Keep chairs and other furniture away from windows to prevent children from climbing up.
- Open windows from the top, not the bottom, if possible.

Firearms

Hazard: Guns

Risks: Children and teenagers are involved in more than 10,000 unintentional shootings each year in which at least 800 people die. In addition, approximately 1,900 children and teenagers attempt suicide with a gun every year; more than three-quarters of them are successful. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics children in homes with guns are in greater danger of being shot by themselves, their friends or family members than by an intruder.

Prevention:

- Keep all guns out of the house.
- If you do have a gun, make sure that it is unloaded and stored in a locked space separate from the ammunition.
- Make sure the keys to the locked cabinet or closet where your gun is stored are out of your child's reach.
- Install child-safety locks on all guns. Locks are sold in most gun stores and range in price from $11 for the simplest devices to $90 for a personalized combination lock that prevents firing by unauthorized persons.
Cords

Hazards: Toys with long strings or cords, pull cords on window coverings, electric cords from lamps and household appliances.

Risks: Strangulation or choking, one of the most common causes of at-home deaths among children aged 4 and younger.

Prevention:

- Keep toys with long strings, cords or ribbons away from babies and young children.
- Never place a crib or child’s bed near a window with coverings that have pull cords.
- Make sure that cords used to open and close window blinds and drapes are tied up and secured out of child’s reach.
- Trim or otherwise raise curtain cords out of children’s reach. The Window Covering Safety Council offers free window-cord safety kits to consumers phoning its toll-free hotline at 1-800-506-4636.
- Ensure cords connecting lamps and household appliances are out of your child’s sight and reach.
- Don't tie decorations or toys across crib rails.

Household Toxins

Hazards: Household cleaning products, Insecticides, Medications, House plants, Alcoholic beverages.

Risks: Poisoning.

Prevention:

- Keep all potential poisons, including alcohol, out of your child’s reach in locked cabinets and in their original containers.
- Install safety latches on cabinets and drawers containing medications and/or cleaning chemicals.
- Never store products containing lye in your home.
- Keep all medications out of children’s reach; keep all drug containers safely capped; buy nonprescription medicines in child-proof containers.
- Determine if any houseplants are poisonous if eaten; if so, replace or keep out of the reach of children and pets.
- Keep the telephone number of your local poison control center and your child’s pediatrician by your phone.
- Call poison control immediately if your child swallows something he or she shouldn’t.
- Have syrup of ipecac in the house to make your child vomit should he swallow something poisonous but use ONLY if so instructed by a poison control representative or your physician.

Fire Danger

Hazards:
Matches, Cigarette lighters, Stoves and other cooking equipment, Fireplaces, Space heaters

Risks:
Every year nearly 47,000 children ages 14 and under die in residential fires; nearly 55 percent of these youngsters are ages 4 and under. Fires set by children playing are the leading cause of residential fire-related death and injury among children ages 9 and under.
Prevention:

- Keep matches, gasoline, cigarette lighters and all other flammable materials locked away and out of your child's reach.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen that completely surrounds the fireplace when burning fires.
- Never leave your child alone in a room where there's a fire in the fireplace.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home and in every sleeping area; test them once a month; replace batteries once a year and the alarms every 10 years.
- Install both ionization alarms, which are better at sensing flaming fires, and photoelectric alarms, which are better at sensing slow, smoky fires.
- Plan and practice fire escape routes from each room of your house.
- Don't smoke at home. Fires caused by cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire-related deaths.
- Keep fire extinguishers anywhere a fire is likely to start.
- Teach children rules for behavior around space heaters, fireplaces and other heat sources.
- Avoid using space heaters in children's bedrooms or where unsupervised.
- Keep appliances unplugged when not in use.

Water Dangers

Hazards: Swimming/wading pools, Spas, Hot tubs, Fish ponds, Fountains.

Risks: Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among all children age 14 and under and the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 1 to 4. But pools aren't the only hazard: since 1980 approximately 230 children ages 4 and under have drowned in spas and hot tubs. In addition, every year nearly 3000 children ages 1 to 4 require hospital emergency room visits for near drowning.

Prevention:

- Learn CPR and always have an adult (preferably one who knows CPR) watching children in the pool.
- Empty and store inflatable pools immediately after use.
- Don't allow children to use inflatable toys or mattresses to keep them afloat in the pool as these can deflate suddenly or children may slip off in deep water.
- Don't allow children to run near a pool or to push others underwater.
- Never allow children to dive into a pool unless you have checked its depth. The American Red Cross recommends 9 feet as a minimum depth for diving or jumping.
- Surround backyard pools with a fence at least five feet high that has a self-locking gate. Make sure your child can't work the lock or climb the fence.
- Teach children over the age of three to swim. The American Academy of Pediatrics doesn't recommend swimming lessons for those under three.
- Remove pool covers completely before swimming and don't allow children to walk on the pool cover -- they could drown in accumulated water or fall through and be trapped underneath.
- Keep a safety ring with a rope near the pool and, if possible, install a telephone in the pool area with emergency numbers clearly marked or on speed dial.
- Never drink alcohol when your children are in a pool or swimming elsewhere--you may not be able to react fast enough to help a drowning child.
- Make sure your child wears a life preserver when swimming in deep water.
- Make sure hot tubs, spas or whirlpools are fenced on all sides or install rigid lockable covers.
The Bathroom

Hazards: Mold

Risks: Mold, mildew and fungi can grow both indoors and outdoors. They are most often present in moist, dark places (bathrooms, basements, leaves, mulch, and curtains). You do not have to touch them to cause symptoms because they reproduce by sending tiny spores into the air. Inhaling the spores can cause allergy symptoms in children as well as adults.

Prevention:

- Cleaning your house regularly and properly can help reduce mold.
- Clean with a commercial antimold product. Choose a product containing a mixture of bleach and detergent or make your own antimold cleaner. Mix 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach and 1 quart of water.
- Clean carefully, especially in areas where mold is likely to grow, such as bathrooms, kitchens, and basements.
- Keep garbage cans and trash compactors clean and free of mildew.
- Store things carefully. Don't store newspaper, clothes, and other items in damp areas because they can become moldy. Store only completely clean and dry clothing and shoes. Even small amounts of grime can stimulate mold growth.