



Search by keyword or item #

ANSWERS @ ACE[Home](#) > [Answers @ Ace](#)**ANSWERS @ ACE**[FAQ's](#)[Project How-To's](#)[Solution Source](#)[What's Bugging You?](#)[The Helpful Hardware Man's](#)[Corner](#)[Vendor Directory](#)

Making Your Home Child Safe



As a parent, from almost the moment your first child is born, you begin to worry about his/her health and safety.

Worry though you will, the only truth about childhood safety that you have to remember is that ACCIDENTS DO HAPPEN. The normal, active, physically healthy child will occasionally have some cuts and bruises.

The key is to keep your child from serious and preventable accidents and injuries. You don't want your child to become part of the national statistics on childhood injuries.

The National Center for Health Statistics says that children under 14 are seven times more likely to die from an accidental injury than a homicide. However, many parents have the misconception that violent acts (things over which they have no control) such as kidnappings, shootings and drugs pose greater dangers to their children than injuries, according to polls. Nonetheless, injuries are the number one killer and disabler of children.

Today there are things parents can do to control the impact of many injuries. One out of every four children suffers a preventable injury that requires medical attention. There are things that can be done to prevent these kinds of serious injuries.

It is for that reason that this document has been written. It is meant to be a primer, not an all-inclusive manual on childhood safety. Use this document as a starting point, perhaps obtaining more information from other resources on the subjects in which you are most interested.

Step #**1**

PREVENTING INJURIES INSIDE THE HOME

Childproofing your home should begin prior to your child learning to crawl because once he/she becomes mobile, you are faced with an ever-increasing, intensely curious whirlwind of activity. Inspect your home while you have the time to do it thoroughly.

Childproofing does not mean moving breakables to higher shelves. It means locking, securing, relocating or removing anything that may pose a potential danger to a child. Young children are very tactile and oral; consequently, any new

object or substance must not only be touched but mouthed to be fully explored.

Use the following checklist as a starting point for childproofing your home.

In the kitchen and bathroom-

- Install "child-resistant" locks on all cabinets within the child's reach. Remember, what is child resistant to most children may not be to yours, so don't assume that with the locks in place your child is safe.
- Remove all cleaning fluids and agents from lower storage areas.
- Remember that very common household items that are generally considered non-poisonous, if taken in large quantity, can kill a 22-pound child. Some of these things include mouthwash, cosmetics, meat tenderizers and spices.
- Keep all medications, including topical ointments such as insect repellents, inside a cabinet that is locked with a key. And place the key where the child cannot reach it.
- Many child care experts recommend clearing out a lower kitchen cabinet and placing in it toys, plastic storage containers or other safe items for the child to play with when he/she wants to be with mom or dad in the kitchen. Also, having a cabinet of his/her own may end some of the need to explore other cabinets in the kitchen.
- Keep all electrical and phone cords bundled and out of reach.
- When cooking, turn pot handles to the back of the stove.
- Do not use tablecloths.
- Install toilet lid locks.
- Never leave a small child alone in the bathtub for even "just a second."

In other areas of your home-

- Install covers over all electrical outlets.
- Install smoke alarms on all levels of your home.
- Place gates at stairways-top and bottom.
- Lift blind and drapery cords out of the reach of children.
- Use specially designed door stops and knobs that prevent children from opening forbidden doors.
- Turn down your water heater thermostat to between 120 degrees and 125 degrees to prevent scalding young skin.
- Many houseplants are toxic. Find out which ones are and, if you have any of them, remove them from your home.
- Make the garage off limits. But just in case, be sure any potentially dangerous items are stored out of reach and/or locked up.
- Remove firearms from your home. If you must have them, keep the ammunition locked in a strongbox stored away from the gun.
- Remove or keep tightly closed 4- to 6-gallon buckets or pails; a child can fall into this size bucket and drown in just a few inches of water.

In addition-

- Place the number of the nearest poison control center near your phone. Include with it your child's weight, allergies and any special medical conditions so you won't have to remember these when in a panic. It will also be available there for a babysitter or visiting relative.
- Have a bottle of ipecac available to induce vomiting if something poisonous is ingested. However, NEVER give the syrup without first consulting with your poison control center or health care provider. They will give you the correct dosage.
- Have a first aid kit and know what to do with its contents.

Remember, childproofing is not a 100 percent guarantee that your child will be safe from injury. It is not a babysitter. Parents must still be vigilant. At best, childproofing slows down the curious young child.

In Case of Poisoning-

If you suspect a case of poisoning, take these three steps right away:

1. Look for signs of poisoning.
 - Dizziness
 - Drowsiness
 - Odor on breath
 - Open bottle or spilled contents
 - Vomiting, nausea or pain in abdomen
 - Difficult or shallow breathing
 - Hyperactivity, irritability
2. Check to see if victim is breathing.
 - If not, call ambulance or police immediately.

- Loosen clothing at neck or throat.
- Perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- 3. Take these first aid actions immediately.
 - Call poison center, emergency room or doctor.
 - Cover victim with blanket-loosen tight clothing.
 - Clear airway.
 - Do not give food, drink, alcohol or drugs.
 - Save and give doctor the poisonous substance as well as container and label.

Step # 2

PREVENTING INJURIES OUTSIDE THE HOME

It seems that children injure themselves more outdoors than indoors. And parents sometimes mistakenly assume this happens because there is very little they can do to control the outdoor environment. However, there are things that can be done, especially around swing sets, play yards and swimming pools.

First and foremost, however, ALWAYS use a child safety restraint seat when riding in the car. Automobile accidents are the number one killer of children. There is no excuse for not using one. Today, most states require the use of safety restraint seats. The cutoff age varies from state to state.

Next review these checklists for suggestions around your home and beyond.

In the backyard-

- Remove plants that are poisonous. (Check with your local poison control center to find out which ones are poisonous).
- Remove plants that attract bees.
- Fencing should be free of sharp or jagged edges, splinters, protruding nails and peeling paint.
- Fill holes in the ground that might cause a child to trip and fall.
- Fix or replace decaying steps and deck boards.
- Always put away fertilizers, gardening tools, pesticides, lawn mowers and other potentially harmful yard tools and equipment.
- Remove peeling paint from outbuildings and/or your house exterior. (See Lead and Your Family's Health, another "Show-How" document in this series, for information about lead-based paints).

In the play area-

- Don't use toxic pesticides or other chemical garden products in the play area.
- Be careful when using a power lawn mower, which can sometimes hurl rocks. Keep children away.
- Be sure the play area is well-drained.
- Check with your local building code agency for safety specifications when building a play structure.

Built or purchased play equipment should meet the following basic safety requirements:

- Angles or openings must be large enough not to entrap a child's head or body accidentally.
- Sharp points, edges, corners or protrusions can be hazardous.
- All screws and bolts should be securely capped.
- Use closed O-rings, not open S-hooks, on swings (or pinch S-hooks closed).
- Swing seats should be made from a light, soft material, such as rubber or canvas, that won't injure if the seat hits a child.
- Swing ropes must be strong enough to support your own weight.
- Periodically check equipment after installation for loose hardware, posts and other framework.
- A layer of wood chips, sand or pea gravel should be spread 6' out from all sides of all structures to prevent injuries from falls. The depth varies according to the material used-wood chips and pea gravel, 3" deep with 6" under swings; sand, 12". Build a low wall around the area to contain the cushioning material.

In the pool area-

Drowning can happen in a matter of minutes and it doesn't matter if you have an in-ground pool or small, child-sized wading pool. Some basic rules are:

- Children may not enter the pool area without an adult who can swim.
- No running, pushing or rough play is allowed in the pool area.
- No glass or electrical appliances are allowed in the pool area.
- Store chemicals and equipment away from children.
- Have a first aid kit near the pool.
- Keep a buoyant life ring on a rope as well as a rescue crook near the pool for pulling the person to the pool's side.
- Put a sturdy cover, strong enough to carry an adult's weight, over the pool. Locking covers are the most secure.
- Local ordinances usually specify the type and height of fencing around your pool. Any gates should be self-latching with locks positioned beyond a child's reach.
- A pool alarm is a handy device that will alert you if a child falls in the pool.
- Have a poolside telephone to prevent that quick dash to the house to answer the phone "for just a minute."
- Invest in swimming lessons for all members of the family. Knowing how to swim is the best defense against drowning.
- Take a lifesaving course.

Step # 3

PREVENTING INJURIES AWAY FROM HOME

Going to and from school, visiting friends, participating in school activities and a myriad of other things will take your child further away from your care as he/she gets older.

A bicycle is one way children from approximately age 7 and older get around. Here are a few basic bicycle safety tips:

- Always wear a helmet.
- Never ride wearing headphones.
- Never ride at night.
- Obey all traffic signals and signs.

In general, you and the other adult members of your household should learn CPR and be trained in basic first aid techniques. Keep a first aid book on hand for reference.

For More Information

National SAFE KIDS Campaign, 111 Michigan Ave. N.W., Washington, DC, 20010.

Local Poison Control Center

National Crime Prevention Institute, University of Louisville-Shelby Campus, Burnhaus Hall, Room 134, (502) 588-6987.

National Safety Council, 444 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL, 60611, (312) 527-4800.

Local library for reference books and other local resources.

Local hardware stores, home centers or bookstores for books such as Sunset's Children's Play Yards, which contain information on outdoor safety.

Away from Home-

As children become older and are away from home more, they increase their chances of meeting adults who may want to harm them. Children have a natural trust in other people. The challenge of parenting is to teach your children to add a little caution in their lives without scaring them to the point of paranoia.

The National Crime Prevention Council recommends that you teach your children to:

- Use the telephone properly in case of emergencies. Practice making emergency phone calls with them.
- Memorize their name, address and phone number (including area code) and your work number.

- Walk confidently and stay alert to what's going on around them.
- Walk and play with friends, not alone.
- Refuse rides or gifts from someone they don't know well.
- Tell a trusted adult immediately if anyone, even a teacher or close relative, touches them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

| |
|--|
| Emergency Telephone Numbers |
| Poison Control Center: |
| Doctor: |
| Hospital: |
| Ambulance: |
| Police: |
| Specifics on each child - weight, allergies, medications: |
| |
| Possible Safety Projects |
| |
| |
| Additional Tools and Materials |
| |
| |
| |
| |

TOOL AND MATERIAL CHECKLIST

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Child-Resistant Cabinet | Toilet Lid Locks |
| Child-Resistant Doorknobs | Stairway Gates |
| Locking Storage Cabinets | Screwdrivers |
| Shovel | Wheelbarrow |
| O-rings | Soft Swing Seats |
| Wood Chips | Pea Gravel |
| Buoyant Life Ring | Smoke Alarms |
| Gate Locks | Keyed Locks |
| Electrical Outlet Covers | Doorstops |
| Locking Metal Boxes | Electric Drill |
| Hammer | Paint Scrappers |
| Fill Dirt | Pliers |
| Screw and Bolt caps | Sand |
| First Aid Kit | Pool Alarm |
| Self-Latching Gate Latches | Cordless Phone |

[back to top](#)

Check your state and local codes before starting any project. Follow all safety precautions. Information in this document has been furnished by the National Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) and associated contributors. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and safety. Neither NRHA, any contributor nor the retailer can be held responsible for damages or injuries resulting from the use of the information in this document.