

Child accident prevention in the home

In the kitchen

The most dangerous place for children is in the kitchen—poisons and burns are the dangers. Put all spray cleaners, kerosene, pesticides, rat poison and so on out of children's reach, and keep matches in a childproof cupboard.

Electric jugs with cords dangling down are very dangerous, and a cup of tea is just as hot as boiling water. Never drink anything hot while holding a baby, or pass anything hot over a baby's head or body. Do not allow saucepan handles to stick out into the kitchen from the top of the stove. Do not use tablecloths. Always put hot food and drinks in the centre of the table.

Preschool children can easily choke on peanuts and small hard foods. Don't leave button (lithium) batteries lying around.

In the bathroom

Poisons and burns are also the main bathroom hazards, but children do drown in baths. Run cold water before hot into children's baths and always test the water temperature before the child gets in. Never leave children unattended in a bath.

Tablets and medicines may be fatal for children: store tablets and medicines in a childproof place and destroy all leftovers. Toilet cleaners and deodorants also should be locked away.

In the playroom

Any object smaller than a 20-cent piece may choke a child: there should be no beads around or small removable parts on toys. Keep jars containing small items such as buttons out of reach. Do not pin dummies to clothing; tie them on instead.

In the bedroom

Remove the plastic cover from a new mattress, remove the bib before the baby goes to sleep, and never leave a baby unattended on the bed or table.

Check children's clothes for fireproof materials and choose the safest garments. Select close-fitting clothes; ski pyjamas are safer than nighties; tracksuits are safer than dressing gowns.

In the yard

Insecticides, weed-killers, fuels, paints, paint strippers and all garden products should be labelled and stored away from children. They should never be stored in old drink bottles. Children will crawl and fall over veranda edges and steps unless they are fenced off.

Short stakes in the garden should be removed, and keep children inside while mowing the lawn. Do not leave ladders around.

In the pool

Five centimetres of water in a pool can drown a toddler. A pool not in use should be made safe from wandering children—at least covered and preferably fenced off—and children should swim only with adult supervision. Keep pool chemicals, especially acid, locked away.

In the car and on the road

Place your child in the car first, and then walk right around the car before reversing down the drive. All children should be placed in approved child restraints, even to be driven just around the corner.

Train your children to sit in the back on the passenger side so that they get out on the kerb.

In general

Floor-to-ceiling glass doors and windows should have two stickers on them (one at your eye level, the other at toddler eye level) to prevent people walking through.

False plugs should be inserted into all power points that are not in use, especially those within toddlers' reach.

Bar radiators and children do not mix. Any type of fire should have a guard around it.

Remember

- Prevention is so much better than cure.
- When you are upset about something it is easy to forget about your child for a moment, so be doubly careful when you are having an 'off day'. Prepare your house now, and good habits will save lives and prevent tragedy later.
- Buy a bottle of syrup of ipecac and write your doctor's telephone number beside your telephone for rapid action should your child swallow something dangerous. Know the local Poisons Information Centre telephone number.
- Your friends' and relatives' homes may not be as safe as yours.