

# Childproofing Your Home

One of the most important steps you can take to protect the health and life of your child is to childproof your home. Perhaps the best way to do this is to take a "baby's eye view." Crawl from room to room so you can spot the sharp corners, uncovered electrical wall outlets and extension cords, hanging cords to lamps and other appliances, and loose objects which might easily fall.

The following is a quick checklist for childproofing areas in your house. Remember, however, that every child and home are different. Check your home carefully. **AND NEVER LEAVE YOUR BABY UNATTENDED!**

## Kitchen

- Turn handles of all pots and pans to the back of the stove so your baby can't reach them. (The best way to avoid accidents is to keep your baby in his playpen or high chair while you cook).
- Avoid using tablecloths that can be pulled down.
- Keep all appliances and their cords away from the edges of counters or table tops. All cords should be coiled up and tied.
- Place safety latches on kitchen cupboards. If you have room, you can let your baby have one cupboard of his own filled with pots, pans, and large plastic bowls.
- Store cleaning products and all other toxic substances in a high cupboard with a lock or safety latch.
- Keep knives and all cutlery in a drawer or cupboard out of your baby's reach.
- Vacuum up broken glass and then use a wet paper towel to clean up small slivers of the glass on your floor.
- Keep mugs of hot drinks out of reach of your child. Whenever you are handling hot liquids, check to see where your baby is **BEFORE** you pick up the tea kettle or pan. You do not want to trip and spill boiling water on your baby.
- Teach your baby from the very beginning that the stove is off limits whether it is off or on. Cook on the back burners of your stove.
- Keep aluminum foil or plastic wrap out of reach. The jagged edges on boxes can cause cuts.

## Bathroom

- Keep all medicines and drugs in a locked cabinet out of your baby's reach. Aspirin is one of the most common causes of childhood poisoning. Be careful to return all drugs to the cabinet after you use them.
- Keep shampoo and soap out of baby's reach.
- Keep hairdryers and curling irons unplugged to avoid electric shock if they should be pulled or dropped into water.
- Lower the thermostat on your hot water heater to 120°F (48.9°C). Always check water temperature before putting your baby into the bath water or under a faucet.
- Be careful about what you throw away. Your baby will find the wastebasket full of interesting things. Put pills, razor blades, etc. in a special wastebasket that is out of baby's reach.
- Use lid locks to keep the baby from opening the toilet seat. Always leave the lid down.
- Put a hook on the outside of the bathroom door or put on a plastic door knob cover. Keep the bathroom door closed.
- Use plastic or paper cups and containers in the bathroom so there is less chance of broken glass.

## Furniture

- Put corner and edge bumpers on sharp edges of furniture such as coffee tables, end tables, and your fireplace hearth.
- Put away all delicate, breakable, and valuable items from tables and shelves until your baby is well past the curious/destructive stage (4 to 5 years old).

- Heavy objects such as TVs, lamps, or stereo equipment, should be pushed back from the edge of furniture, fastened to the wall, or kept out of reach so the baby doesn't accidentally knock them over when trying to crawl or stand.
- Make sure bookcases and other dangerous furniture pieces are fastened to the wall with a wall anchor so your baby can't pull the piece of furniture over on top of himself.
- Diaper pails can be dangerous to curious babies. Babies can drown in the soaking pails. Keep a latched cover on the pail.
- Make sure your changing pad is fastened to the wall or changing table so it will not slip off. Store ointments, creams, safety pins and all other baby changing items out of reach.
- Do not put plants in places where your baby could reach them.
- Hang mobiles and dangling toys out of reach so that baby can't strangle on the string. The string should be no more than 12 inches long. Remove the mobile as soon as your baby can stand.
- The various baby powders and talcs can be dangerous. Never use them near a fan or allow the baby to play with the container--he could choke on the dust.

## **Floor**

- Check the floor area daily for small objects that baby could choke on: pins, small bits of food such as popcorn, peanuts, etc.
- Make sure heaters are well ventilated and are protected by safety guards.

## **Outlets and Cords**

- Cover unused electrical outlets with plastic caps. You can also get boxes that will cover outlets that are being used. Where possible, place furniture in front of outlets.
- Never leave extension cords plugged in where your baby can find and chew on them and be seriously burned or shocked. Tape any excess cord down so baby won't be so interested.
- Keep phone cords out of reach, so that the baby doesn't pull the phone down on his head. If you put the phone on the floor, try putting a wide rubber band over the switch hook points so the phone line is not on when the receiver is lifted. You can still receive calls while the baby plays, but you won't have any unexpected long-distance phone bills.

## **Doors and gates**

- Use safety gates at the top of stairs, three steps up from the bottom of stairs, and in front of forbidden rooms or areas. Safety gates that fasten to the wall are safer than the gates held against the wall by pressure.
- Put decals on glass doors or window to prevent your baby from bumping into them.
- Put a fireplace door lock or gate around your fireplace.

## **Windows**

- Keep all cords from drapes or blinds out of reach or use a cord wind-up device.
- Use window guards or netting to protect your child from falling out of an upper story window.