

## 15 Ways to Keep Your Children Safe at Home

November 2017

School personnel work hard to keep students safe during the school day. On a daily basis, school staff actively identify and address issues that may compromise student safety. Processes, defined procedures and training are also used to address risks, including playground and classroom safety, transportation issues, bullying concerns, etc.

How many of us have applied these principles at home for our own family? We feel safe at home when we close the door behind us at the end of a long day, but are we making sure our homes are truly as safe as we feel in them? Preventable injuries such as burns, poisonings, drownings and falls are *the leading cause* of death for children, teens and young adults (you will be glad to know “young” means up to age 44). These are the leading causes of death for older adults too!

Want to spend your day in the E.R.? The average E.R. wait time across the country is 4-7 hours according to a recent study. What would you rather doing with those hours? Then there is the cost. Injuries cost the nation \$80 billion every year in medical costs alone, with the estimated lifetime cost of annual injuries in the U.S at \$406 billion, a drain on your pocketbook and the nation. And the worst part? A family member injured at home by a preventable incident.

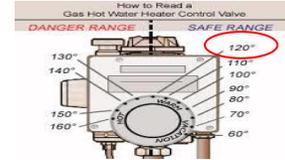
*If you have less than one minute a day to devote to safety, use it to:*

1. **Wipe up spills and don't store items on stairs.** Falls are the *leading cause* of nonfatal injuries for every age group, except 10 to 24 year olds - and for them it is the *second* leading cause! Just like at school, spills are a leading cause of injury at home. Every day, 8000 children and 5600 older adults go to the emergency room for fall-related injuries. Falls from steps and stairs are also a leading cause of falls in children and adults. Keep them clear! (<http://prevention1st.org/safety-resources/>).
2. **Never leave a child alone near water** not even for less than a minute. Bathtubs, buckets, toilets, and hot tubs are risks in addition to pools.
3. **Test your smoke alarm** (even hard-wired units) to make sure they are working and that everyone can hear them. Put it on your calendar to test the units when recommended. Have at least one smoke alarm on each floor and preferably inside each bedroom. Units with ionization and photoelectric alarm technologies are best. Purchase carbon monoxide (CO) detectors, place them by sleeping areas and test them as well. CO kills in minutes, and is colorless, tasteless and odorless.
4. **Put matches and lighters** in a high cabinet or locked drawer, out of sight and reach of children. A leading cause of deaths for children under age 5 is the result of playing with fire.



5. **Turn off portable space heaters** when you leave the room or go to sleep. Approximately 32% of heating-equipment fires involved a space heater, but these fires caused 82% of associated deaths.

6. **Adjust the thermostat on your water heater** to keep hot water less than 120°F, to prevent scalds. Use a meat thermometer to test.



7. **Turn off the stove** if you have to leave the kitchen while cooking. Unattended equipment is the #1 contributing factor in cooking fire deaths.

8. **Put on your glasses** and read the fine print on that medicine bottle. Unintentional poisonings are on the rise for people 35 to 54 years old. Annually, they cause more deaths than motor vehicle crashes.

9. **Put away or lock up household cleaners and medications** out of the reach of children to prevent poisoning.

10. **Clear clutter** from hallways and doorways to prevent tripping.

11. **Install handrails on stairs** and ensure there is adequate lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs. Falls from stairs, steps and ladders is a leading cause of adult injuries.

12. **Use a fire safety checklist and schedule an annual chimney cleaning.** (<http://www.prevention1st.org/documents/HomeFireSafetyChecklistwithFPClogoandAddr.pdf>).

13. **Play Help Mikey Make It Out** with your kids. This interactive game (<http://www.homefiredrill.org/>) teaches life-saving home escape lessons to kids.



14. **Plan and practice your home escape.** Only 26% of families have practiced a fire escape plan. Does everyone know what to do when a smoke alarm or CO detector sounds - especially in the middle of the night? Does everyone know where to meet outside or otherwise find each other? You may have as little as two minutes to escape!

15. Purchase a quality fire extinguisher for each floor of your home. Home fires are the single greatest cause of disaster across the nation.

The holiday season will be fast upon us with more time spent at home with our families and friends. Use this newsletter and the identified references to address safety issues in your own home. We constantly work to protect children at school for whom we are responsible. Let's do the same for our families!