

Safety Centre

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Safety at home for your family

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1. How to child-proof your home inside and out

Child-proofing your home is one of the most important steps that you can take as a parent to keep your child safe in the home. Child-proofing means that you spot any potential dangers and then remove the risk of your child becoming injured.

Before you start child-proofing your home, take a few minutes to get down on your hands and knees and go through your home inside and out from your child's vantage point. You might feel a little foolish but you'll be able to see every angle from your child's height.

Go from room to room, remembering to include the hall, stairs and landing. It's also important that you child-proof all areas outside the house including the garage, front and back gardens and driveway.

2. Before your baby arrives: Safety checklist

Once your baby arrives, you can be kept very busy looking after your little bundle of joy - there can be little or no time for child-proofing the house, so it's a good idea to do this before the little one gets here. Here is a list of guidelines for you to check off so your house is baby ready:

- Install and check that smoke detectors are working on a regular basis.
 - Ensure there is a working fire extinguisher on each floor of the house.
 - Install carbon monoxide (CO) detectors if you've gas or oil appliances and ensure that you check the batteries twice a year.
 - Prepare a first-aid kit for your baby and keep it somewhere that's readily accessible.
 - Post emergency numbers next to your telephone including your baby's GP.
 - If paint is flaking or peeling, this should be removed or sealed.
 - Cover any furniture with sharp edges with padding.
 - Set your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or below as baby's skin is more delicate than adults
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- Install window stops so that they open no further than 4 inches.
 - Shorten looped window blind cords and ensure they're out of reach of a child.
 - Install covers on electrical sockets.

3. Before your baby begins to crawl: Safety checklist

On average, most babies will begin to crawl at around eight months with many babies starting earlier than this. Once your baby is crawling they will also learn how to pull themselves up which opens a whole host of other dangers around the house. So before your baby begins to crawl, it's important that all the following measures have been put in place to help eliminate any dangers for your toddler:

- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Keep hot food and plates away from the edges of tables and counters.
- Turn pan handles towards the back of the cooker.
- Fit an oven door handle to protect against burns.
- When your baby can get up on their hands and knees, mobiles and hanging toys should be removed from over the cot.
- When your baby can pull themselves up, the mattress should be lowered to the

lowest setting.

- Doorstops should be used to protect your baby's fingers.
- Electrical appliances such as hair dryers and toasters should be kept out of reach.
- Your child should never be left alone on beds, couches, bouncy chairs, high chairs or changing tables.
- Use rubbish bins that are fitted with childproof lids.
- Secure fridges with appliance locks.
- Put childproof locks on any cabinets or presses that contain sharp objects, chemicals or glass.
- Attach corner and edge guards.
- Never leave your child alone near a body of water, regardless how small for any period of time.
- Shorten looped window blind cords and ensure they're out of reach of a child.

4. Safety spotlight: The kitchen

The kitchen is one room that presents many dangers for children which is why it's important to be vigilant and ensure that any possible dangers have been removed. The following is a kitchen safety checklist which acts as a guideline for parents:

- Ensure that safety latches are installed on drawers and cabinets that can be reached by a child.
- Store all sharp utensils and household cleaning products in a latched cabinet out of a child's reach.
- Ensure that appliance cords are not dangling from the counter; a child could easily pull the cord causing a heavy appliance to fall on top of their head or body.
- When cooking always use the back rings of the cooker, and face saucepan handles towards the rear of the stove so your child is unable to reach the saucepan.
- Ensure that a working fire extinguisher is always readily accessible in the kitchen and that you know how to use it.
- Don't cover the table with tablecloths or placemats as your child could pull them and whatever else is on the table down on top of them.
- Always keep emergency phone numbers by the phone or on the fridge. Include numbers for emergency services, the local garda station, doctor and ambulance service.

5. Safety spotlight: The bathroom

The bathroom presents many dangers for children. It's important that the necessary measures to ensure your child's safety in the bathroom are taken:

- Never leave your child unattended in the bath. It's advised to always keep one hand on your child while bathing and if you need to leave the room, wrap your child in a towel and bring them with you.
- Ensure that there is never standing water left in the bath or sink as even a little water creates a drowning hazard.
- Children and babies skin is far more delicate than an adult's so it's important that you reduce the temperature of your water heater to 120 degrees. What an adult considers warm could scald a baby's delicate skin.
- Fit a spout cover to protect your child should he slip and fall.
- Use a non slip mat in the bathtub to protect your child from slipping.
- Remove items from about the bath tub (shampoo, conditioner, razors) as anything small

enough to fit into a toddler's mouth becomes a choking hazard.

- Install safety latches on bathroom cabinets.
- Install a lid lock on toilets, this will not only remove the risk of drowning but will also prevent your child from flushing any valuables down the toilet.
- Ensure that the bathroom door can't lock. If desired, for privacy reasons, have a bolt lock installed out of your child's reach.

6. Safety spotlight: The nursery

When planning your baby's nursery it's important that you make your baby's safety a priority. Follow these guidelines to ensure your baby's safety:

- Never buy an older, used crib as it may be missing parts.
- Make sure that all hardware is tight and secure.
- Ensure that the mattress fits snugly into the crib frame to prevent the child from becoming stuck.
- Check your baby's crib to ensure that the bars are no more than 6 cm apart (roughly the size of a mineral can). If they are, then the bars are spaced too far apart and it's not safe.
- Avoid placing the crib near the window and if the crib is near a window, make sure that curtains and blind cords are out of reach to prevent strangulation.
- Ensure that the cot is kept a safe distance away from any lamps and electrical appliances.
- Do not place furniture under windows as children love to climb.
- Install window locks which allow you to open the window about 4 inches.
- Keep mobiles and other nursery decorations out of your baby's reach as once your baby can stand, they become a strangulation hazard.
- In order to prevent your baby from rolling off the changing table use guardrails. A baby should never be left unattended on a changing table.
- Any furniture that could topple over should be secured to the wall with brackets.
- Toys should never be left in the crib.
- Cover electrical sockets with self-closing covers.
- Do not hang picture frames or mirrors over your baby's crib, as once they can stand they may grab at these and they could fall on top of them.

7. Stairwell and banister safety in the home

Staircases are always a source of worry for parents so it's essential to follow these safety guides:

- Staircases are a common source of bumps, bruises, broken bones and other injuries. Always keep stairs and surrounding areas clear of clutter as they can cause children (and adults) to trip.
- In houses with toddlers and young children, safety gates should be securely fitted at the top and bottom of the stairs. They should also have a locking handle in place that can be operated with one hand.
- Banister posts should be less than four inches apart. Larger openings allow children to slip through where they can become lodged.
- Furniture should never be placed near a balcony as children love to climb and could fall over the balcony.

8. A guide to fire safety in the home

The home presents many dangers for children and the risk of fire is an ever present one. It's important that parents know what fire risks are and that they understand how to prevent them:

- Young children should never be left home alone for any length of time.
- Lighters and matches should be kept out of a child's reach.
- Install working smoke alarms and test them regularly.
- Install a child-proof fireguard in front of an open fire or heater.
- Never let children play near a fireplace or heater.
- Never leave children alone in the kitchen when you're cooking or allow your child to play near a cooker.
- Always ensure that electrical appliances are switched off when not in use.
- Check all leads and plugs for fraying or burning and replace if needed. Sockets should never be overloaded.
- Ensure that there is a working fire extinguisher on every level of the house.

9. Garden/ outdoor: Safety checklist

While it's important that children play outside, it's also vital that parents are aware of the dangers that are present in their gardens or outdoor play area.

- Are paths, steps and outdoor staircases fully lit?
- Are paths, steps and outdoor staircases clear of toys or objects that may cause a child to trip?
- Are all rubbish bins securely covered?
- Are all swing sets free of rust, splinters and sharp edges?
- Are all parts on swing sets securely fastened?
- Is there a soft surface (such as sand or an approved rubber surfacing mat) beneath the swing set which will absorb the shock of a fall?
- Are outdoor toys and equipment (e.g. trampolines) put away in a secure, dry place when not being used?
- Walls should feature a self-closing gate with a childproof latch.

10. Poison: How to prevent poisoning in the home

A poison refers to any substance that can cause harm or is potentially fatal if swallowed, inhaled, injected or absorbed through the skin or eyes.

Poisoning in the household can be caused by medicines, household products, cosmetics, plants, garden products, farming and industrial chemicals and animals.

A child is most likely to consume a poison between the ages of 1 and 4. Most incidents of poisoning take place in the child's home, the home of a relative or at school.

In order to avoid accidental poisoning, harmful substances such as chemicals and medicines should be kept out of reach of children.

Containers with child-resistant lids should be used but it's important to understand that these are child resistant not child-proof so they should also be kept where a child cannot access them.

All harmful chemicals or medicines should be kept in their original containers.

Use child-proof locks on any cupboards that contain harmful substances.

Read medicine labels clearly and speak to your GP or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Check with staff in your garden centre when buying plants to ensure that they are not poisonous.

Never:

- Leave containers open after use.
- Transfer products from their original containers.
- Remove labels from chemicals or medicines as the label can contain important information.
- Take medicines in front of children as they like to copy adults.
- Refer to medicine or tablets as sweets.

11. How to poison proof your home

Most cases of accidental poisoning in the home can be avoided by keeping any dangerous items out of reach of your child. In order to poison-proof your home it's important that you are aware of where the dangers lie. Follow our room-to-room guide to ensure that all poisonous chemicals are kept out of reach:

Kitchen:

Detergents, dishwasher tablets, bleach, drain cleaners, oven cleaners, disinfectant, batteries, furniture polish and liquigel capsules.

Bathroom:

Medicines, vitamins, bleach, bathroom cleaners, toilet cleaner, cosmetics, toiletries, shower gel, shampoo, toothpaste and mouthwash.

Bedroom:

Medicines, perfume, aftershave, nail polish, nail polish remover and essential oils.

Handbags

Medicines, coins, sanitary hand gel, cigarettes.

Shed or garage:

Petrol, paraffin, car products, insecticide sprays or powders, rat poison, white spirit, glue and paint.

Garden:

Plants, berries, flowers, mushrooms, slug killer, insecticide, plant food and weed killer.

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