



H O M E
S A F E T Y

is Not an Accident

**Keeping Children Safe from Birth
through Kindergarten**

A partnership between The Safety Institute
and the Massachusetts Medical Society Alliance

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Introduction

Children are our most precious gifts. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, babysitter, or daycare provider, you know how challenging it can be to keep little ones out of trouble.

As children grow out of infancy into their preschool years, their natural curiosity and desire to explore their world can often lead to dangers if the adults who look after them are not prepared.

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death and hospitalization for children 5 years of age and under. Not surprisingly, the majority of these serious injuries occur in or around the home.

In an effort to help you make your home safe so that the children you love and care for will be safe, the Massachusetts Medical Society Alliance, in conjunction with The Safety Institute, has prepared this information. We want to help you care for young ones so that they can live happy, productive, and safe lives.



Preparing Your Home for a New Arrival

Whether you have just brought an infant home, are caring for a toddler, or have visiting grandchildren, it is likely that you have been inundated with advice from your doctors, nurses, family members, and friends. Here are some guidelines on how to make your home safe.

- Keep the home and child's sleep environment free of tobacco smoke, including cigarettes and cigars.
- Purchase and install plug covers for all electrical outlets and install cabinet locks on all cabinets. Place corner guards on any sharp architectural features or furniture.
- The only safe way to hide a gun is to lock it away. Store and lock ammunition separately. When it comes to guns, you can't be too careful!
- Keep all dangerous materials, including pesticides, cleaners, medications, and firearms, locked up and out of sight.
- Keep telephone cords well out of reach or fasten them to the wall with appropriate staples.
- Properly fasten flat-screen televisions to a wall. Do the same with high bookshelves or dressers. Every 45 minutes in America, a child is hurt in a furniture-related fall.



C R I B

Safe Sleep for Infants

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health recommends that infants younger than 12 months always be placed to sleep on their backs.

To reduce the risk of suffocation or strangulation, remove these items from an infant's sleep environment:

- Soft mattresses or cushions
- Blankets, comforters, pillows, or other soft bedding items
- Bumper pads
- Wedges or positioning devices
- Stuffed animals or toys
- Plastic sheets or plastic bags
- Window coverings with strings, cords, or ropes

Never place a crib near a furnace, space heater, or any other heat source.

For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/sids/resourcelinks.htm.

Also recommended:

- Place infants to sleep on their backs in safety-approved cribs or bassinets with firm mattresses using well-fitting sheets made for the crib or bassinet.
- Infants should sleep in the same room with a parent or caregiver but on a separate sleep surface. This allows parents to check on and bond with the infant and supports breastfeeding. This also reduces the risk of suffocation or rolling over on the infant. If possible, use a monitor in the bedroom so that you can hear and/or see the baby while you are in another room.
- Infants should be dressed in a sleeper or a sleep sack to avoid over-bundling and overheating.
- An infant should never be allowed to sleep unwatched in a car seat, stroller, or baby swing.
- Parents and caregivers should inform relatives, friends, babysitters, and child-care providers that infants should be placed to sleep on their backs at all times.

REMEMBER — *Back to sleep!*



KITCHEN

Burn Prevention and Kitchen Safety

The two biggest dangers in the kitchen are scalds and burns from hot liquids and ingestion of poisons.

Being scalded by hot liquid is the nation's leading burn injury to children 5 years of age and younger. According to the Massachusetts Fire Marshal's Office, hot tea and coffee are most often the cause.

Here's how to help prevent burn injuries:

- Never hold babies or toddlers while drinking hot beverages. A wiggling child can move your arm and spill the drink.
- Never place hot drinks and soups near the edge of a table or other surface where children can reach for them.
- Do not use table coverings so children cannot pull them and anything on top onto themselves.
- Always turn pot handles on the stove away from a child's reach.
- Place child-proof covers over stove switches.
- Set a NO-GO ZONE for toddlers and older children around the stove and barbecue.

Electric stoves may not appear "hot" or as dangerous as gas stoves do with their flames, but these burners get just as hot and are just as dangerous.

Consider low-cost locks for refrigerator doors to prevent your little ones from opening them, wreaking havoc, or possibly getting inside.

Keep knives and other sharp utensils high or otherwise stored away from children.

Children enjoy "helping" you cook or bake. Keep a container with plastic, wood, or paper play items that the child can bring to the table.

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/eopss and search "burn prevention."

*If a child ingests something dangerous,
call the Poison Control Emergency
Line at (800) 222-1222
IMMEDIATELY.*

Preparing Your Home for Small Children

All Massachusetts homes are required to have functioning smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Be sure these are installed and in good working order.

Keep matches and lighters out of sight and in a safe place. This means keeping them either in a locked cabinet or on your person — NOT in your purse or on the table.

Make sure your electrical outlets have safety covers and your kitchen cabinets are locked.

Keep children away from all telephone, electric, and computer cords.

Remove scatter rugs for children who may run, trip, and fall.

If you live in a multistory home or apartment, install window guards on all higher-level windows. Screens are designed to keep bugs out; they do NOT keep children IN.

If your home has stairs, install an approved toddler gate that's screwed into place until your child learns to navigate the stairs safely.

Use a guard or screen to keep children away from a fireplace or wood-burning or pellet stove — even when not in use.

To avoid accidental drowning, keep any buckets full of liquid away from toddlers. Keep toilet lids shut and purchase childproof locks for your bathroom doors.

Toddlers move fast! They need to be watched constantly to make sure they don't go outside unattended.

If you have a backyard pool, be sure there is appropriate fencing in place to deter curious children. Check with your city or town hall for local ordinances. Cover the pool seasonally to avoid accidents from falls.

NEVER leave a child unattended in a motor vehicle — even for a minute.



Bath Safety for Infants and Toddlers

- Infants should be bathed in a sink or tub designed for this purpose.
- Put your elbow in the water to test the temperature so that your child is not scalded or chilled.
- With children in the bathtub, be vigilant.
- Maintain visual contact.
- Put your phone away — refrain from taking calls or texting.
- Keep electrical devices and appliances, such as a radio, razor, hair dryer, hot iron, and toothbrush charger, away from the bathtub and sink.
- Place children facing away from faucets, so that they cannot turn on the hot water. Use non-slip pads on the bottom of the bathtub.
- You may wish to purchase protective covers or guards for the bathtub faucets.

When dressing your infant after bath time, use a changing table. Always keep one hand on your child to avoid a fall.

BATH

Home Office

A home office, whether it is a separate room or corner of your kitchen or bedroom, can pose a number of hazards. In addition to keeping electric, telephone, and window shade cords out of reach, keep these potential dangers in mind:

- **Shredder:** Unplug when not in use.
- **Paper cutter:** Keep up high or in a locked cabinet.
- **Scissors:** Place out of reach of small children.

Window Shades

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, “kids and cords don’t mix.”

Take these steps to help prevent strangulation:

- Examine all window shades and blinds for exposed cords on the front, side, and back of the product.
- Use cordless window shades or blinds in homes with young children.
- If you cannot afford new, cordless window coverings, contact the Window Covering Safety Council at (800) 506-4636 or at www.windowcoverings.org for a free repair kit to make them safer.

Magnets

High-powered neodymium magnets, eight times stronger than magnets you had as a child, are a safety risk to children — toddler through teen. Children can swallow these magnets, resulting in serious injuries.

When two or more magnets are swallowed, they are attracted to each other internally and must be removed surgically, often requiring the repair of the child’s stomach and intestines.

If you think your child has swallowed a magnet, contact your pediatrician or go to the emergency room. Watch for stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or nausea.

Visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov for more information on window shades and magnets, as well as the latest information on recalled products.



Potential Hazards

There are a number of everyday items you will use for your young child. Consider these measures before inadvertently placing an infant or child in harm’s way.

Secure and tighten high chair straps so an infant does not slip under the tray.

Proper crib assembly is important. Follow the instructions provided and make sure that every part is installed correctly.

Never place a crib near a window with a Venetian blind, window shade, or curtain cords or near baby monitor cords; babies can strangle themselves.

Pad the rails of the crib to prevent teething children from biting them.

Set up play yards according to manufacturers’ directions. Only use the mattress pad provided with the play yard; do not add extra padding.

Some baby products that have been the subject of recent recalls include:

- **High chairs:** A defective high chair could collapse, harming a child.
- **Cribs:** Cribs should not be more than 10 years old. Do not use broken or modified cribs. Infants can be strangled if their bodies pass through gaps between loose components or broken slats while their heads remain entrapped.



Keeping Up with Preschoolers — Avoiding or Responding to Trouble

One of the most exhausting transitions in the life of a parent or caregiver is when a baby becomes a mobile toddler. This is especially true if a toddler has older siblings.

Whether due to parental distractions, sibling rivalry, or mimicking, toddlers with older siblings in the home are at higher risk of accidental harm.

Toddler-proofing your home is essential. In addition to the steps taken with an infant, toddlers and young children can get into trouble despite your best effort.

Small children explore, play with, and sometimes ingest inappropriate items.

If there is a balcony, high porch, or roof deck, ensure that young children cannot climb over or fall through railings or from seating placed near the edge of these high settings.

Always call 911 in case of an emergency.

Despite the warnings on packages that some toys should not be used by children under 3 years of age, a small item can often find its way into tiny hands and mouths.

Should this occur, quickly sweep the child's mouth to remove the object. If a child swallows the object, check for any abnormalities in breathing and call your pediatrician or poison control center immediately.

Some items that toddlers have been known to play with, taste, eat, or otherwise sample include: diaper cream, deodorant, animal fur, cat litter, gasoline, rodent poison/traps, and more. If such a situation arises, call Poison Control or take your child to the emergency room immediately. And remember, an incident like this does not mean you are a bad parent or caregiver, it just means you need to be extra careful in protecting a curious child.



Outdoor and Recreation Safety

Never leave a child unattended near water in a pool, tub, bucket, or ocean. There is no substitute for adult supervision.

- Designate a “water watcher” to maintain constant watch over children in the water.
- Do not use flotation devices as a substitute for supervision.
- Learn CPR and rescue breathing.
- Keep a life-saving ring, shepherd’s hook, and CPR instructions mounted at poolside.
- Never leave water in buckets or wading pools.
- If a child is missing, always check the pool first. Seconds count.
- Remove toys in and around the pool when not in use.
- Do not use floating chlorine dispensers that look like toys.
- The home should be isolated from the pool with a fence at least 60 inches tall with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- The pool gate should open away from the pool and should never be propped open.

- Access to the pool area should be alarmed to alert adults when opened.
- Power-operated pool safety covers are the most convenient and efficient. Solar/floating pool covers are not safety devices.
- Keep a phone at poolside in case of emergency.
- Instruct babysitters about potential pool hazards, and emphasize the need for constant supervision.
- Do not consider children “drown-proof” because they’ve had swimming lessons.

Responsibilities of pool ownership include ensuring children in the home learn to swim and that adults know CPR. Additional information is available at www.drowningpreventionfoundation.org.



Backyard Safety Tips

Smaller children should be directed to appropriate outdoor play equipment and toys.

Whenever possible, swing sets, seesaws, and other large outdoor toys should be placed on grass or natural wood chip beds for softer, safer landings.

Cover the sandbox when not in use to keep the sand dry and free from contaminants.

Massachusetts state law states that children 16 years of age and under **MUST** use a properly fitted helmet when riding on or using any conveyance, such as a tricycle, bicycle, scooter, skates, or skateboard.

Do not use yard maintenance equipment such as lawn mowers or hedge trimmers when small children are present.

If there is a cesspool or water well, be sure they are secured with a cover too heavy for a child to lift.

Buying a Helmet — Be Sure It Fits

Eyes: Wear it low on your forehead — the rim of your helmet should be two finger widths above your eyebrows.

Ears: The straps should form a “Y” just beneath the earlobe.

Mouth: The buckle should be flush against the skin under the chin: when you open your mouth, you should feel the strap snug on the chin and the helmet hugging the head.

WWW.SAFEKIDS.ORG

Y A R D



C A R

Child Passenger Safety Laws

In Massachusetts, children **MUST** be placed in a properly installed child safety seat when traveling in motor vehicles.

Children under 1 year of age must be placed in a rear-facing infant seat with a five-point harness.

Children ages 1 to 4 should be placed in a forward-facing car seat with a five-point harness.

Children ages 5 to 8 are required to ride in booster seats until they either reach a height of 4 feet, 9 inches, or turn 8 years old, whichever comes first.

IMPORTANT: NEVER use a second-hand car seat, even one passed down from a relative. Do not purchase child safety seats at yard sales, flea markets, or rummage sales. Only purchase new seats approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.



Hazards at Grandparents' Homes

One of the great joys for older adults is the chance to bond with their grandchildren. However, safety laws and best practices have changed a lot over the years, so new parents should be mindful of this when taking their infants and toddlers to visit grandparents or other older adults.

Furniture and appliances can constitute a hazard. Land-line telephones may be mounted on walls or kitchen counters, and their cords may pose strangulation hazards for small children. Older model "box" televisions, dressers, bookcases, china cabinets, and other furniture can present tip-over hazards for curious toddlers.

Medications should be hidden and high up where small hands cannot find them. Often, these medications will not have child safety caps. Some older adults keep medication on the table or other low surface in a dish or pill container. Never leave open medication out.

Make safety easy. Check the home you are visiting for hazards before bringing in the children, whenever possible. Bring your own gates, cabinet locks, and leave your child's safety or booster seat if your child is staying without you.

Be firm about your safety rules. Using appropriate sleep settings, high chairs, safety seats, and other equipment is important. Explain that you expect the grandparents or other older adults to follow the safety rules you have in place for your child.

Numbers to Keep Nearby

Emergency: Dial 911 from your home telephone for a true emergency. Dialing 911 from your cell phone will connect you with the state police.

Poison Control: (800) 222-1222

Pediatrician: _____

Fire: _____

Police: _____

Day Care/Preschool: _____

Babysitter: _____

Our Cell Numbers: _____

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