

Home Safety Checklist



How safe is your home? Most homes could probably be made safer, especially if children live there. Your family will be healthier and safer if you practice prevention and prepare for emergencies. First, “hazard proof” your home using the following checklist developed by the American College of Emergency Physicians. Next, take a first aid course and learn to recognize the warning signs of an emergency, and learn CPR.

Help prevent injuries in your home. Begin with this checklist:

Keep emergency numbers on every telephone in your home. Include numbers for your family physician and pediatrician, regional Poison Control Center, and if 911 is not in your area, fire department, police department, and ambulance service.

- Make sure your house number is clearly visible from the street.
- Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit that includes a first-aid manual and up-to-date medical records for every member of the family. Make lists of medications (including dosages) and allergies for each family member. Review them periodically, and replace supplies as they are used or expire.
- Buy medicines and other household products with child-resistant caps. Be sure to keep these and other materials that are unsafe for children out of their reach.
- Have and rehearse an emergency evacuation plan in case of fire or other emergency.

Kitchen Safety Tips

- When cooking, use back burners and keep pot handles turned inward.
- Set refrigerator temperature between 35° Fahrenheit and 40° F and the freezer at or below 0° F.
- Never leave perishable food unrefrigerated for more than 2 hours, and less during hot weather.
- Always wash cutting boards, knives, other utensils, and counter surfaces that have been used to prepare raw meats before reusing; also allow them to dry before reusing.
- Adequately ventilate the area above a cooking surface.

Bathroom Safety Tips

- Use nonskid bath mats on bathroom floors and in bathtubs and showers.
- Keep floor, wall, and fixtures clear of water, soap, and other residues.
- Don't operate electrical appliances (electric clocks, radios, hair dryers) near water-filled sinks and other water sources. Unplug appliances when not in use.
- Use nightlights.
- Never leave young children alone in a bathroom.

General Safety Tips

- Install smoke detectors and replace batteries twice a year.
- Place at least one fire extinguisher on every floor, near exits and in full view; train household members in their use. Inspect fire extinguisher gauges every few months, and practice fire drills several times a year. Have a fire escape ladder on each upper floor.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors; replace the batteries twice a year.
- Eliminate clutter.
- Set your hot water thermostat to no more than 125° F.
- Never store chemicals or medicines in food containers; always keep them in original containers.
- Be sure windows are secure. Install window guards to keep children from falling. Be sure windows unlock and open easily; never paint bedroom windows shut.
- Keep electrical cords out of reach of children.
- Be sure child-resistant safety latches are on all cabinets and drawers containing harmful substances. These include medications, cleaning supplies, paint, insecticides, and adult beverages.
- Purchase toys appropriate for your child's age. In homes with more than one child, be aware that older children's toys may be hazardous for younger ones. Keep toys with small parts and other small objects out of reach of toddlers and young children.
- Keep combustible materials away from space-heaters and wood stoves.
- If you have firearms, store them unloaded and locked. Store ammunition locked away and separate from firearms.

For more health and safety tips, visit ACEP's web site at www.acep.org.

The American College of Emergency Physicians is a medical specialty association of more than 20,000 emergency physicians. ACEP is dedicated to improving emergency care through continuing education, research, and public education. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, ACEP has 53 chapters representing each state as well as Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Government Services.