



June 2011—National Home Safety Month

By Karen Mayne

June is National Home Safety Month. A safe home is a healthy home . and what could be %greener+ than that?! The Home Safety Council (www.HomeSafetyCouncil.org) says that unintentional injuries in and around the home result in nearly 21 million medical visits each year. Here are some things you can do to protect your home and the loved ones in it.

Prevent Falls

- Install grab bars in the tub and shower, and handrails on both sides of stairs and outside steps. Have bright lights in these areas.
- Be extremely careful when using ladders. Always use a %spotter+when using an extension ladder and never use them around power lines. Unless you make your living using a chain saw, NEVER use a chain saw while on a ladder or in a tree.
- Use baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs if babies live in or visit your home.
- If you have area rugs, install anti-slip pads under them. Use anti-slip edging on stairs. When someone in the house uses a walker or cane, it might be best to remove any area rugs that have the potential to move around.

Prevent Poisonings

- Keep all dangerous materials (cleaners, pesticides, medicines, etc.) in their original containers and read the directions for safe use and what to do in case of poisoning. Use child safety locks on cabinet doors and put dangerous materials up high where children can't reach them (even with a chair).
- Use medications carefully and talk to your doctor about all medicines and over-the-counter supplements you take. Medication overdoses and drug and supplement interactions are a leading cause of accidental deaths.
- Don't flush unused medications down the sink or toilet . they will end up contaminating water supplies. Instead, remove the medication from its container and mix with kitty litter or coffee grounds in a sealable bag before throwing it into the trash. Mark through your name and prescription information on the bottle before disposing so no one else can use the information to obtain a prescription refill.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas to prevent deaths from faulty heating systems, appliances that use gas, or fireplaces. Never leave a car running in a garage . it can quickly lead to a build-up of deadly carbon monoxide fumes.

Prevent Fires and Burns

- Have working smoke alarms and change the batteries annually (use the autumn time change or New Years as your reminder). Hold fire drills with your children and make sure everyone in the house knows how to escape and where to meet when they get outside.

- Never leave the kitchen when cooking on the stove top, especially when you are frying food.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn and turn them off when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- If you smoke, smoke outside. Use deep ashtrays and put water in them before you empty them. Lock matches and lighters in a place where children can't reach them.
- Reconsider the use of candles since they are a leading cause of house fires. There are many %fake+candles that look real. Only light candles when an adult is in the room, and use them in a candle holder that would contain the candle if it falls over or leaks wax. Blow the candle out when you leave the room or go to sleep.

Prevent Choking and Suffocation

- Anything that can fit through a toilet paper tube can cause a young child to choke. Keep coins, latex balloons, and hard round foods such as peanuts and hard candy out of children's reach.
- Talk to your pediatrician about what age appropriate foods to serve your child. Teach children to sit down when they eat and take small bites.
- Read the labels on all toys, especially if they have small parts. Be sure that your child is old enough to play with them.
- Clip the loops in window cords and place them high up where children (and pets) can't get tangled up in them.
- Place babies to bed on their backs. Don't put pillows, comforters, or toys in the crib to prevent sudden infant death (SID).

Be Smart Around Water

- Stay within an arm's length of children in and around water. This includes bathtubs, toilets, pools and hot tubs . even buckets of water.
- Empty large buckets and wading pools after using them. Keep them upside down when not in use.
- Make sure children always swim with an adult. No child or adult should swim alone.
- Keep the hot water heater set at or below 120 degrees to prevent burns. That temperature is sufficient for washing machines and dishwashers.

Handy Emergency Phone Numbers

Keep these and other important emergency numbers near the main phone in your house or a handy location in your kitchen where all residents and visitors can see them. Also add these numbers to your cell phone.

General Emergencies: 911

Poison Control Center:
1-800-222-1222

Dominion Virginia Power:
1-866-366-4357

Virginia Natural Gas:
1-877-572-3342

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