

# Home Safety Checklist

Use this checklist to help ensure that your home is safer for your child. A “full-house survey” is recommended at least every 6 months. Every home is different, and no checklist is complete and appropriate for every child and every household.

## Your Child's Bedroom

- Is there a safety belt on the changing table to prevent falls?
- Is the baby powder out of baby's reach during diaper changing? Inhaled powder can injure a baby's lungs. Use cornstarch rather than talcum powder.
- Are changing supplies within your reach when baby is being changed?
- Never leave a child unattended on a changing table, even for a moment.
- Is there a carpet or a nonskid rug beneath the crib and changing table?
- Are drapery and blind cords out of the baby's reach from the crib and changing table? They can strangle children if they are left loose.
- Have bumper pads, toys, pillows, and stuffed animals been removed from the crib by the time the baby can pull up to stand? If large enough, these items can be used as a step for climbing out.
- Have all crib gyms, hanging toys, and decorations been removed from the crib by the time your baby can get up on his hands and knees? Children can get tangled in them and become strangled.
- Make sure the crib has no elevated corner posts or decorative cutouts in the end panels. Loose clothing can become snagged on these and strangle your baby.
- Does the mattress in the crib fit snugly, without any gaps, so your child cannot slip in between the crack and the crib side?
- The slots on the crib should be no more than  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches apart. Widely spaced slots can trap an infant's head.
- Are all screws, bolts, and hardware, including mattress supports, in place to prevent the crib from collapsing?
- Make sure there are no plastic bags or other plastic material in or around the crib that might cause suffocation.
- Check the crib for small parts and pieces that your child could choke on.
- Make sure the night-light is not near or touching drapes or a bedspread where it could start a fire. Buy only “cool” night-lights that do not get hot.
- Is there a smoke detector in or near your child's bedroom?
- Make sure that window guards are securely in place to prevent a child from falling out the window. Never place a crib, playpen, or other children's furniture near a window.
- Are there plug protectors in the unused electrical outlets? These keep children from sticking their fingers or other objects into the holes.
- Make sure a toy box does not have a heavy, hinged lid that can trap your child. (It is safer with no lid at all.)
- To keep the air moist, use a cool mist humidifier (not a vaporizer) to avoid burns. Clean it frequently and empty it when not in use to avoid bacteria and mold from growing in the still water.
- To reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), put your baby to sleep on her back in a crib with a firm, flat mattress and no soft bedding underneath her.

## Your Bedroom

- Do not keep a firearm anywhere in the house. If you must, lock up the gun and the bullets separately.
- Check that there are no prescription drugs, toiletries, or other poisonous substances accessible to young children.
- If your child has access to your bedroom, make sure drapery or blind cords are well out of reach. Children can get tangled in them and become strangled.
- Is there a working smoke detector in the hallway outside of the bedroom?

## The Bathroom

- Is there a nonskid bath mat on the floor to prevent falls?
- Is there a nonskid mat or no-slip strips in the bathtub to prevent falls?
- Are the electrical outlets protected with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters to decrease the risk of electrical injury?
- Are medications and cosmetics stored in a locked cabinet well out of your child's reach?
- Are hair dryers, curling irons, and other electrical appliances unplugged and stored well out of reach? They can cause burns or electrical injuries.
- Are there child-resistant safety latches on all cabinets containing potentially harmful substances (cosmetics, medications, mouthwash, cleaning supplies)?
- Are there child-resistant caps on all medications, and are all medications stored in their original containers?
- Is the temperature of your hot water heater 120°F or lower to prevent scalding?
- Do you need a doorknob cover to prevent your child from going into the bathroom when you are not there? Teach adults and older children to put the toilet seat cover down and to close the bathroom door when done—to prevent drowning.
- Remember, supervision of young children is essential in the bathroom, especially when they are in the tub—to prevent drowning.

## The Kitchen

- Make sure that vitamins or other medications are kept out of your child's reach. Use child-resistant caps.
- Keep sharp knives or other sharp utensils well out of the child's reach (using safety latches or high cabinets).
- See that chairs and step stools are away from counters and the stove, where a child could climb up and get hurt.
- Use the back burners and make sure pot handles on the stove are pointing inward so your child cannot reach up and grab them.
- Make sure automatic dishwasher detergent and other toxic cleaning supplies are stored in their original containers, out of a child's reach, in cabinets with child safety latches.

- Keep the toaster out of your child's reach to prevent burns or electrical injuries.
- Keep electrical appliances unplugged from the wall when not in use, and use plug protectors for wall outlets.
- Are appliance cords tucked away so that they cannot be pulled on?
- Make sure that your child's high chair is sturdy and has a seat belt with a crotch strap.
- Is there a working fire extinguisher in the kitchen? Do all adults and older children know how to use it?

## The Family Room

- Are edges and corners of tables padded to prevent injuries?
- Are houseplants out of your child's reach? Certain houseplants may be poisonous.
- Are televisions and other heavy items (such as lamps) secure so that they cannot tip over?
- Are there any unnecessary or frayed extension cords? Cords should run behind furniture and not hang down for children to pull on them.
- Is there a barrier around the fireplace or other heat source?
- Are the cords from drapes or blinds kept out of your child's reach to prevent strangulation?
- Are plug protectors in unused electrical outlets?
- Are matches and lighters out of reach?

## Miscellaneous Items

- Are stairs carpeted and protected with non-accordion gates?
- Are the rooms in your house free from small parts, plastic bags, small toys, and balloons that could pose a choking hazard?
- Do you have a plan of escape from your home in the event of a fire? Have you reviewed and practiced the plan with your family?
- Does the door to the basement have a self-latching lock to prevent your child from falling down the stairs?
- Do not place your child in a baby walker with wheels. They are very dangerous, especially near stairs.
- Are dangerous products stored out of reach (in cabinets with safety latches or locks or on high shelves) and in their original containers in the utility room, basement, and garage?
- If your child has a playpen, does it have small-mesh sides (less than 3/4 inch mesh) or closely spaced vertical slats (less than 2 1/2 inches)?
- Are the numbers of the Poison Control Center and your pediatrician posted on all phones?
- Do your children know how to call 911 in an emergency?
- Inspect your child's toys for sharp or detachable parts. Repair or throw away broken toys.

## The Playground

- Are the swing seats made of something soft, not wood or metal?
- Is the surface under playground equipment energy absorbent, such as rubber, sand, sawdust (12 inches deep), wood chips, or bark? Is it well maintained?
- Is your home playground equipment put together correctly and does it sit on a level surface, anchored firmly to the ground?
- Do you check playground equipment for hot metal surfaces such as those on slides, which can cause burns? Does your slide face away from the sun?
- Are all screws and bolts on your playground equipment capped? Do you check for loose nuts and bolts periodically? Be sure there are no projecting bolts, nails, or s-links.
- Do you watch your children when they are using playground equipment—to prevent shoving, pushing, or fighting?
- Never let a child play on playground equipment with dangling drawstrings on a jacket or shirt.

## The Pool

- Never leave your child alone in or near the pool, even for a moment.
- Do you have a 4-foot fence around all sides of the pool that cannot be climbed by children and that separates the pool from the house?
- Do fence gates self-close and self-latch, with latches higher than your child's reach?
- Does your pool cover completely cover the pool so that your child cannot slip under it?
- Do you keep rescue equipment (such as a shepherd's hook or life preserver) and a telephone by the pool?
- Does everyone who watches your child around a pool know basic lifesaving techniques and CPR?
- Does your child know the rules of water and diving safety?

## The Yard

- Do you use a power mower with a control that stops the mower if the handle is let go?
- Never let a child younger than 12 years of age mow the lawn. Make sure your older child wears sturdy shoes (not sandals or sneakers) while mowing the lawn and that objects such as stones and toys are picked up from the lawn before it is mowed.
- Do not allow young children in the yard while you are mowing.
- Teach your child to never pick and eat anything from a plant.
- Be sure you know what is growing in your yard so, if your child accidentally ingests a plant, you can give the proper information to your local Poison Control Center.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

