



Keeping Your Child Healthy & Safe

Children are only as healthy as the environment they live in. Keep your child healthy by ensuring a healthy and safe home. Children must also be taught some core safety rules around personal safety, road safety, and safe play. Rules provide limits and guidelines young children need to stay safe and healthy. Remember, the only reliable way to prevent accidents and ensure safety of young children is adult supervision. Here are some tips for keeping your child healthy and safe:

GENERAL:

- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors; be sure to change the batteries twice a year – usually, when the clocks are changed.
- 'Child-proof' your home. Put up barriers (safety gates, cupboard locks, outlet covers, secure bookcases and heavy dressers to the wall) in areas where children might be at risk. Be aware of potential household hazards, such as scalding and burns (set the water heater to less than 120 degrees) or poisoning (put away/lock all medications and toxins, such as cleaning solutions). Be sure to add new safety measures, as your child gets older.
- Keep a First Aid Kit in the home; childproofing won't ensure that your child never gets hurt.
- Protect against lead poisoning, which can cause brain damage and behavior problems. Homes more than 30 years old may have lead paint. Watch for peeling or chipping paint. Small children sometimes like to chew the chipping lead paint, because it tastes sweet. Repainting is essential to avoid lead poisoning! Call the Maryland Lead Poisoning Hotline for information at 1-800-776-2706.

INFANTS AND TODDLERS (birth to age 3)

- Always use a car seat or booster seat (depending on age/weight) when riding in the car.
- Start teaching basic home safety rules as early as possible, such as: 1) where your child can/can't go in the house; 2) what is/isn't safe to touch; 3) only put food in your mouth; 4) keep hands away from the stove; and 5) hold the hand railing when walking on the stairs.
- Talk about emergency workers in your community — police officers, firefighters, paramedics, doctors, nurses, and so on — and what kinds of things they do to help people who are in trouble. This will clarify not only what types of emergencies can occur, but also who can help.
- Begin teaching 'road safety': 1) hold hands in parking lots and when crossing the street; 2) never go in the street alone; 3) look both ways before crossing the street; 4) cross the street in a crosswalk and only when the crossing signal flashes 'Walk'; and 5) stop for red lights and stop signs.

YOUR PRESCHOOLER (4 year olds):

- Show your child the smoke alarm and let her hear what it sounds like. Talk about what to do if there is a fire. Have a fire drill: practice dialing 911, crawl on the ground, use 'stop, drop, and roll', get out of the building, and meet at a pre-selected location.
- Talk with your child about what to do if a stranger tries to take him somewhere, offers a ride or candy, or touches him inappropriately. Some things to teach: 1) beware of strangers; 2) say no; 3) run away; 4) yell: "This person is trying to take me away" or "This person is not my parent/guardian;" 5) ask for the secret password (a one-word, easy-to-remember password, which children ask any individual for – even someone they know–prior to going with them); and 6) tell parents or another trusted adult if someone touches your body (anywhere where underwear covers).

Book Suggestions

Be Careful and Stay Safe by Cheri Meiners • Dinosaurs, Beware! A Safety Guide by Marc Brown

• Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey •

No Dragons for Tea: Fire Safety for Kids (and Dragons) by Jean E. Pendziwol