

Safety Fact Sheet

Home safety checklist



What is a Home Safety Checklist?

In Australia, injuries are the single leading cause of death, a major cause of disability, and the second most common reason for children going to hospital. ¹ Many of the injuries occur in the child's own home. While it is almost impossible to completely injury-proof your home, you can lessen the risk to your child by making your home safer. The Home safety checklist is a tool designed to assist parents and carers in making the home a safer place.



How may a child be injured?

Burns

- Children may sustain burns from oven doors, hot plates, irons and heaters and powerpoints.
- Children may sustain scalds from hot water taps in the kitchen, laundry and bathroom.
- Children may sustain scalds and burns from hot liquid (including hot drinks such as tea or coffee) and hot food. Steam from a kettle can also cause scalds and burns.
- Children may sustain burns from chemicals in the home and garden shed/garage.
- Children may sustain burns from cigarette lighters, open fires, barbecues, matches and candles.
- Children may sustain burns from over exposure to the sun.



Choking

- Young children may choke on small objects that can be inhaled or swallowed such as small beads inside bean bags, pieces of foam, small toys, pieces broken off toys, coins, small batteries, etc.
- Young children may choke on hard pieces of food such as raw carrots, apple pieces or celery sticks.
- Young children may choke on foods such as popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips or other similar foods.



Drowning

- Children may drown if left on their own in the bath.
- Babies may drown if left alone in a bath seat or bath cradle.
- Young children can drown in only a few centimetres of water. Nappy buckets or other containers with water in them are dangerous if left where a child can reach them.
- Children may drown in garden ponds and water features that are uncovered.
- Children may drown in backyard swimming pools or spas.
- Children living in country areas may drown in dams, irrigation channels and water tanks.

Entrapment

- Children may become entrapped in cot railings that are not between the recommended width of 50mm and 85mm.
- Children may get their head, arms or legs caught in the space between vertical railing posts on stairs, veranda or deck railings.



Falls

- Children may suffer head injuries or broken limbs when falling from outdoor play equipment.
- Children may suffer head injuries, broken limbs or be killed when falling from windows, balconies or other high surfaces.



¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. A picture of Australia's children. Canberra: AIHW, 2005. Available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10127/> (accessed Jul 2005).

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Poisoning

- Children may be poisoned if they swallow medications or vitamin supplements left within their reach.
- Children may be poisoned if they swallow cleaning products or chemicals used in or around the home/garage.
- Children may be poisoned if they eat plants that produce poisonous vegetation, berries, flowers or fruit.
- Children may be poisoned if they swallow the small batteries, used in watches, cameras and small toys, if the contents leak out.

Strangulation

- Young children may be strangled by cords or ribbons that are part of toys, dummies, clothing, blinds or curtains.
- Children may be strangled if their heads become caught in stair or deck rails that have gaps wider than 12.5cm.

How common are these injuries?

In Australia, injury was the leading cause of hospitalisation in those aged 10-14 years, the second leading cause of hospitalisation in those aged 5-9 years, and the third leading cause in those aged 1-4 years and 15-24 years during the period 1999-2000 to 2003-2004.²

² Hayen, A and Mitchell, R *NSW Injury Profile: A Review of Injury Hospitalisations during 1989-1990 to 2003-2004*, NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre, Sydney: IRMRC, 2006

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Home environment

- Do you have a safety switch to prevent electrocution? Yes No
- Do you have a smoke detector located in the area outside each bedroom? Yes No
- Are safety plugs fitted in spare power points to prevent children from pushing objects into them? Yes No
- Are safety gates installed at the top and bottom of stairs to prevent children from falling? Yes No
- Are finger-jam protectors used on doors in your home to prevent finger injuries to children? Yes No
- Is alcohol stored in a child resistant cupboard, 1.5m above ground level? Yes No
- Have you ensured that there are no baby walkers in your home? Yes No
- Are balustrades (or handrails) installed on balconies, porches, pathways, etc., which are 1 metre or more above the floor or ground level? Yes No
- Are stair railings no less than 1 metre in height, non-climbable with gaps between vertical posts no wider than 10cm? Yes No
- Do you have a fence that restricts access to your driveway and the street? (Gates and fences with horizontal rails are easier for children to climb over). Yes No
- When driving in the car, do children always travel in the back seat in a properly fitted Australian Standards approved child restraint? Yes No

Kitchen

- Do your appliances have cords that do not dangle over the kitchen bench? Yes No
- Do you use the back hot plates and turn pot handles around to prevent pots being pulled down from the hot plates? Yes No
- Do you use a stove/hot plate guard? Yes No
- Are knives, scissors and other sharp objects stored out of reach of children? Yes No
- Are all cleaning products, chemicals and medications properly labelled and stored in a locked cupboard at least 1.5 metres above the ground? Yes No
- Do you have a fire blanket or fire extinguisher within reach of your stove? Yes No
- Can you restrict access to the kitchen? Yes No

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Do you keep hot drinks and hot food out of the reach of children? Yes No

Do you use place mats rather than table cloths on your tables so that young children can not pull hot food or drinks onto themselves? Yes No

Are matches, cigarette and stove lighters kept out of reach of children? Yes No

Do you use an oven-door guard to prevent children directly touching a hot oven door? Yes No

Bathroom

Have you regulated the hot water delivered to your bathroom to 50 degrees Celsius to prevent serious burns? Yes No

Does the bath have non-slip mats or hand rails? Yes No

Are medicines and sharp objects kept in a locked cupboard, 1.5 metres above ground level, out of reach of children? Yes No

Are any electricals (i.e. hair dryers, electric shavers) stored safely and away from water when not in use? Yes No

Is the bath water temperature always "tested" before putting the child in the bath? Yes No

Are hot water taps unable to be operated by small children? Yes No

Are young children supervised at all times when in the bath? Yes No

Laundry

Are cleaning products, bleaches and detergents stored out of reach, in a child resistant cupboard, 1.5 metres above ground level? Yes No

Is the nappy bucket used with a lid on and kept out of reach of children? (emptying water when not in use) Yes No

Can you restrict access to the laundry? Yes No

Living areas

Is the furniture located safely? (e.g. away from windows, blind cords, ceiling fans and balcony railings) Yes No

Are sharp edges on tables and furniture covered? Yes No

Are safety guards placed around all heaters, open fires, etc. Yes No

Are blind and curtain cords out of reach? Yes No

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Are glass doors protected by safety film, colourful stickers or made of safety glass? Yes No

Is alcohol stored in a child resistant cupboard, 1.5 metres above ground level? Yes No

Are handbags containing medicines kept out of reach of children? Yes No

Are toys kept away from the main walkway and off stairs? Yes No

Are rugs and mats secure to prevent a fall? Yes No

Are dangerous items placed up high, out of reach of children? (e.g. watch batteries, tea and coffee, peanuts) Yes No

Are large objects like bookshelves, TVs, entertainment units or wall units secured (i.e., so they can't fall down on children)? Yes No

Child's bedroom

Is the space between vertical cot railings between 50mm and 85mm wide? Yes No

Are hot water bottles or electric blankets not in use in a child's cot or bed? Yes No

Are toys suitable for the child's age and not in the cot? Yes No

Is the furniture (including child's bed) located safely? (i.e. not near electrical switches, windows, blind cords or ceiling fans) Yes No

Are bunk beds not in use in households with children under 9 years? Yes No

Garden shed/outdoors

Can your garden shed or garage be locked at all times? Yes No

Are pesticides, paints, car products and other poisons stored in tightly covered, labelled, original containers, 1.5 metres above ground level, out of reach of children? Yes No

Are snail pellets, insect baits and repellents used in areas where children are unable to gain access to them? (these can look attractive to young children) Yes No

Are children always supervised around dogs and other pets? Yes No

Have poisonous plants been removed from the garden? Yes No

Has rubbish, with the potential to conceal poisonous spiders/snakes, been cleared out of the yard? Yes No

Is the outdoor barbeque unable to be turned on by children? Yes No

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- Have you shaded outdoor play areas? Yes No
- Is the outdoor play equipment in good condition and not potentially dangerous? Yes No
- Do you have softfall (eg; woodchips) around play equipment that is 500mm or higher? (sand and grass are not appropriate soft fall material if the equipment is higher than 500mm) Yes No
- Are children familiar with the road rules when riding bicycles, scooters, rollerskates, and are helmets always worn? Yes No
- Are outdoor containers, which have collected water after rain or watering, drained? Yes No
- Are fish ponds or water features covered with strong wire mesh so your child cannot fall in? (children can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water). Yes No
- Does your pool have a fence at least 1.2m high around all four sides of the pool that cannot be climbed by children and has a self-closing, self-latching gate? Yes No

In the case of an emergency

- Do you have a first aid kit in your home? Yes No
- Do you know basic first aid procedures? Yes No
- Do your children know the 000 emergency number? Yes No
- Do you know the location of water, gas and electricity shutoffs? Yes No
- Do your children have a fire escape plan and have you practiced it? Yes No
- Do you have the phone number for the poisons information centre 13 11 26 by the telephone? Yes No

If you answer no to any of these questions then your children are at risk.
List some important changes that you can put into effect in your home to make it safe:

Remember

- Check your home for hazards.
- It is very easy to make your home safe.
- Make sure friends and relatives' houses are safe as well.