# HOME SAFETY

#### *What are the Health and Safety Risks?*

**W**hen it comes to safety, preventing injuries at home is important for people of all ages. A family member’s chances of getting hurt at home are much higher than at work or school. Very young children and older adults are the most likely to get hurt. The leading causes of death and injury in the home are:

* Falls
* Poisoning
* Fires or burns

#### ***Where Do Home Safety Risks Come From?***

* Blocked airway
* Drowning
* Weapons

Falls are the leading cause of deadly and non-deadly accidental injuries for people aged 65 and older. Most falls happen at home and can be inside or outside. Most people trip and fall at floor level, not going up or down stairs. Older adults are more likely to be victims of falls, and the resulting injuries can affect their ability to lead an active life, or worse.

Young children can get into everyday items that can poison them. Children like to play with things that they find because they can look or smell good and by nature they are curious. Children may find new things appealing such as medicine, makeup, household chemicals, alcohol or plants. Babies and toddlers will put items in their mouth as they crawl or run around.

Fires and burns are a main cause of death in the home. Older adults are most at risk. They might not be able to hear an alarm or get out of their home or apartment quickly. Older adults also may have difficulty seeing, smelling or hearing.



When a person is choking, a blocked airway can cause them to stop breathing and can be fatal. Children under age 4 and older adults are the most likely to die from choking. People usually choke on food although children can choke on something they find, like a button or a coin.

Suffocation happens when a person’s nose, mouth, or throat is blocked and they can’t breathe. If someone stops breathing long enough, they can suffer brain damage or die. Sheets, blankets, and plastic bags can suffocate people or pets who get caught in them. Strangulation deaths and injuries can occur anywhere in the home. For example, corded window coverings are a risk for young children and pets.

Drowning is a major safety risk at the home. Children aged 1 to 4 have the highest drowning risk. Weapons are also a major safety concern.

Many of these causes of death and injury are preventable.



**What can you do to help the families**

**and communities you serve?**

*Actions for Living in a Healthy Home*

Stakeholders and service providers should be aware that many families live in blended and extended home situations where multiple families are joined in one residence, causing space to be cramped and trip and fall injuries to be a higher risk. Encourage and facilitate families to be aware of home hazards and to take action for those family members at highest risk of injuries in all rooms of the home.

Some actions that families can take to increase the safety of their home include:

Help Prevent Trips, Slips and Falls

* Keep floors clear of anything that could cause someone to trip. This includes: clothing and shoes, papers and newspapers, and clutter.
* Use night lights in bedrooms, hallways, stairs, landings, and bathrooms to increase visibility.
* Don’t use chairs or tables as ladders.
* Use safety gates to prevent falls down stairs. Repair any stairs that are cracked or worn. Install secure handrails on steps and ramps.
* Use anti-slip mats around and in tubs and showers.
* Supervise children and keep their play area away from windows and stairways.
* Be aware that screens alone cannot prevent children from falling. Use window guards and window stops. Window guards prevent children from falling out of windows. Adults and older children should know how to open these easily in case of fire. Window stops prevent the window from opening more than 4 inches.
* If possible, open windows from the top to get fresh air, not the bottom.

Help Prevent Fires and Burns

* A smoke/fire alarm should be located on every level of a home and an additional one in or near every sleeping area.
* An adult should always be in the kitchen during cooking in ovens or on stoves. Family members should never put or leave flammable items on or near the stove or cooktop.
* Store matches, lighters, and other heat sources in a safe place like a locked drawer.
* Talk about fire safety with children. Talk about how to prevent fires and what to do if there is a fire.
* Plan and practice a fire escape route.
* Keep a fire extinguisher on each level of the home.
* Keep floor pathways clear of electrical and extension cords.
* Keep portable heaters out of doorways, halls, and other busy areas and away from curtains, bedding, and anything that could catch on fire.

Help Prevent Choking and Suffocation

Small children, older adults or other people that need help eating should not eat food that they could easily choke on. Everyday foods like nuts, popcorn, hard candy, or other small foods can easily get stuck in the throat.

* Have children drink while sitting up. Drinks like formula, milk, and juice can make babies choke if they are drinking while lying down, especially when drinking from a bottle.
* Balloons are a choking hazard. Infants and toddlers are most at risk for choking on items like small toy parts, coins, marbles, buttons or anything that can fit in their mouths.
* Do not tie toys or pacifiers to children’s clothes. Small children should not wear jewelry around their necks.
* Read every toy package to make sure it’s safe for children in the home. Small toy parts are a choking hazard. Only allow children to play with toys that match or are recommended for below their age.

Help Prevent Strangulation

* Corded window coverings can accidently strangle infants, children and pets. In 2012, new standards were approved for corded window coverings. If a home has older window coverings, it is best to replace them. Children can accidentally wrap window cords around their necks and become entangled. This is a very serious hazard and may cause death.
  + Drawstrings on children’s clothing can be hazardous. Children shouldn’t wear jackets, hoodies or sweatshirts with drawstrings longer than 3 inches. Drawstrings must be stitched to the back of clothing. Do not purchase clothing with toggles or attachments on drawstrings. Drawstrings can attach to playground equipment, vehicles or furniture and may cause strangulation.

Help Prevent Tip-Over Hazards

Furniture and appliances such as televisions that are not well secured represent tip-over hazards to young children in particular. Children can be subject to injuries from tip-overs, including crush and head injuries. Parents or caregivers should ensure that furniture and appliances are stable and not prone to tipping.

* + Large appliances and furniture (e.g., bookcases) should be anchored to the wall.
  + Televisions should be on sturdy, low bases and should be pushed as far back on stands as possible.
  + Remote controls, toys, and other items that might attract children should be kept off of TV stands or furniture that represents tip-over hazards.

Help Prevent Drowning

* + Parents or other adults should always supervise children and older adults by the water. Life jackets or vests should be worn on docks, at beaches, rivers and by the pool.
  + Make sure any pools, hot tubs, or spas have a fence around them. Make sure the fence is at least 5 feet high or the height required by the local building code, if higher. Select a pool fence with a self-closing gate and install pool and gate alarms near pools. Surface wave and under water alarms are also available. Make sure pool and spa covers are in good condition.
  + Young children should never be alone in the bathtub. Use toilet lid locks when you have toddlers in the home to prevent drowning in the toilet. Remember, children can drown in only a couple inches of water.