

CHRISTMAS SAFETY TIPS - Part II

Childproofing For the Holidays

Most parents understand the importance of childproofing their own homes. Gates on stairs and keeping medicines and poisons out of reach are standard in most homes with young children. Kids can run into trouble if they visit a home during the holidays (or anytime of year) that isn't childproofed. It is especially likely that a home isn't childproofed if you are visiting grandparents or other relatives and they don't usually have children in the house.

In addition to not having safety locks on cabinets, gates on stairs, covers on electrical outlets, etc. They may also have prescription medications that aren't in child resistant containers. Things to be especially watchful for and ask homeowners about include:

- Do they have a pool? Does it have a fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate? Can the children get to the area where the pool is located?
- Are there guns in the house? Are they stored unloaded in a locked box with the bullets locked separately?
- Are there small objects, such as hard candy or nuts in candy dishes, where younger children can get them?
- Are there gates on the stairs?
- Are medications, poisons and household cleaners out of reach?
- If your child has food allergies, will they be serving that food?
- Clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler could rise early and choke on leftover food or come in contact with alcohol or tobacco.

You may think that you will just watch your child more closely, even if the house isn't childproofed, but this is hard if there are a lot of family members and friends present and the kids are all playing together.

Toy Safety

- Select safe toys to suit the age, abilities, skills, and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards to younger children.
- Children under age three can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age three cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter and 2 1/4 inches long.
- Look for sturdy construction, such as tightly secured eyes, noses and other small parts.
- For all children under age 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- To prevent both burns and electrical shocks, don't give young children (under age ten) a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet. Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.
- Be a label reader. Look for labels that give age recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- Check instructions for clarity. They should be clear to you, and when appropriate, to the child.
- Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys, which can cause suffocation, before they become deadly playthings.
- If your child is going to be getting something that he can ride, such as a bicycle, inline skates, scooter, or a skateboard, be sure that he also gets the appropriate protective equipment, including a helmet and pads.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on deflated or broken balloons. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches long. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; SafeUSA; U.S. Fire Administration; Christmas Safety Tips When You Have A Baby In The House, by Tiffany B.; Christmas-Safety-Chris.pirillo.com.; About.com.firstaid; Reader'sDigest.Com



the Hannah Geneser
foundation

