

Health & safety

"Before Joe was born I never thought about where I left things. Nowadays, everything in the house seems dangerous. I feel I have to follow him everywhere. Yesterday he found my painkillers in the bedroom and nearly swallowed some. It happened so quickly."

- Babies and children learn by exploring their surroundings
- Babies do not automatically know what is dangerous
- Babies need guidance to keep safe at home
- Remove all potential dangers in your home
- Watch your child and remove him or her from danger
- Explain about safety to your child from an early age

Making your home safe

Babies and young children learn about their world by exploring it. This means that, as soon as they are able to, they will crawl, touch and grab at whatever is in their line of vision. They are curious by nature and need careful and gentle guidance from a young age about what danger is and what to stay away from. Shouting at or smacking children will not teach them about safety.

Most accidents happen in the home and this is why it is important to ensure that your home is safe for all your family especially for young children. There are many situations each year in which children have overdosed on their parents' drugs and medicines.

Some dangers around the home:

- Make sure that all medicines and drugs are locked away well out of reach and your use of them is private to avoid your child copying you.
- Certain rooms are necessarily full of danger, such as the kitchen, and should remain out of bounds or made safe by the use of safety devices.
- Are your children contained within the house? Is the safety chain high enough on the front door even for a very active toddler?
- Crawling and exploring are an essential part of their development - keep an eye on your young children, especially near wires and sockets.
- Beware of pets around young children. Even trained and good-natured animals can turn on them.
- Make sure that irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents.
- The home you live in is full of dust and this can trigger or make worse any allergy your child has such as asthma. Keep your home as dust free as you can.
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children's health. Children will be affected by passive smoking and your smoking may encourage them to smoke when they are older.
- Check toys for safety marks. Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for his or her age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.

WARNING SIGNS

Spend some time exploring your house as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers which, if not removed, could harm your child.

ACTION

Make a list of these potential dangers and remove them to safety or protect your child from them by using safety devices. Talk to the contacts listed if you are unsure about this.

WHAT TO SAY

With very young children the tone of your voice and facial expressions alongside explanations are extremely important. Children will begin to sense the warning tone in your voice over time.

PREVENTION

Remove dangerous objects like drugs, syringes, medicines and household chemicals out of the reach of children and lock them away safely. Do this before your child is exposed to any hazard.

CONTACTS

- Talk to your health visitor, midwife or GP
- Child Accident Prevention Trust
020 7608 3828
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)
0121 248 2000

*Check the Bracknell ACPC website for the latest phone numbers:
www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk*