

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD. FIRE / EMS DEPARTMENT



TIPsheet



CHILDHOOD UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES

NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION? PLEASE CONTACT THE PGFD/EMS
COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICE AT 301-883-5250



Approximately 2,300 children in the United States, ages 14 and under, died from accidental injuries in the home in 2007, and 3.4 million kids are treated in emergency rooms for accidental injuries occurring at home. Most fatal injuries at home are caused by suffocation, fire and burns, drowning, choking, falls, poisoning or firearms discharged unintentionally. The Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department urges parents and caregivers to check their homes at least once a year for basic safety precautions. "There's no substitute for active supervision, but childproofing your home provides extra protection and peace of mind."

The first step in childproofing a home is to explore every room at a child's eye level. "Literally get down on your hands and knees and crawl around. You will be surprised at how much you can reach and how many small objects you can pick up. Remember, "Anything that can fit through a standard 1½-inch toilet paper tube is a potential choking hazard. Of course, cleaning products, alcohol, firearms and other potentially harmful products need to be stored out of reach and locked up."

Space Heaters It is very important that you keep all space heaters and other heating elements away from combustible materials.

Set your water heater no higher than 120 degrees F. At higher temperatures, it only takes three seconds to burn a child's skin severely enough to require surgery.

Memorize this phone number: 800-222-1222. From anywhere in the United States, this toll-free number will connect you to the local Poison Control Center. Call this hotline if a child has ingested any substance that isn't food — but if a child is choking or having trouble breathing, call 911.

Test your smoke alarms every month. Make sure you have working smoke alarms in every sleeping area. Also check for fire hazards such as frayed electrical wires or flammable materials near heating appliances.

Install carbon monoxide detectors in every sleeping area and near fuel-burning appliances. This invisible, odorless gas can be fatal.

Put safety gates at the top and bottom of every stairway. Gates installed with hardware are safer than pressure gates.

Cover unused electrical outlets. You can buy plastic outlet covers, or just use duct tape.

Keep firearms unloaded and locked out of reach. And lock up ammunition in a separate place.

Post emergency numbers by every phone. In addition to the numbers for fire and emergency medical services, keep numbers for the pediatrician and a neighbor handy.

Check your first aid kit to make sure it is fully stocked. Make sure babysitters know where to find first aid supplies and how to handle an emergency.

"Safety comes first, even if it means making your home a little less convenient for adults, it is a small price to pay to keep a child out of the emergency room."