

Keeping Kids SAFE!!

As new parents might attest, we go to great lengths to protect our children. Nothing is too much or too expensive for the new life we are bringing into the world. Homes are child proofed, the latest gadget purchased to assure safety, baby monitors that can pick up the minutest sound from baby's room. Consumer Reports books and magazines are devoured, looking for the BEST cribs, car seats, high chairs, carriers, strollers, walkers, and on and on and on.

Who could blame a new parent for wanting the best, safest home and products for their child? To protect our children and families we have smoke detectors and fire extinguishers, burglar alarms and monitoring, seat belt and air bags, bike helmets, and many other obvious safety items.

As the child grows, a second or third child arrives, and we have become 'seasoned' parents, too often the quest for child safety falls by the wayside. However, parents must always be vigilant where their child's safety is concerned. Parents who keep up on new and innovative ideas, trends, and methods to keep their children safe, stay ahead of the game and ahead of potential problems in our changing world. No one person can think of or cover all areas of safety, therefore, the following areas of interest may be of help to get you on the right track.

Lastly, in this day of "blended families" and/or parents having gaps between children – those older children need safety tips also. No one person can think of or cover all areas of safety, therefore, the following areas of interest may be of help to get you on the right track.

- **Childproofing your home**

Childproofing the home should include; moving toxic or poisonous substances and cleaners to high (preferably locking) cabinets. Installing childproof latches on drawers and cabinets containing sharp or dangerous objects and childproof doorknob covers (to deny access to unsafe rooms/areas such as basement, garage, bathroom, etc.). Child gates should be installed at stairwells to prevent falls. Electrical safety-outlet covers, no dangling cords or extension cords, eliminate exposed electrical including light bulbs. Checking drapery and blinds pulls/cords (should not hang where a child could reach) to prevent strangulation. Removing breakable and heavy objects from low tables, counter or shelves, that can be easily pulled over and hurt or trap a child. Fencing yard, pools, spas, or any other body of water, and possibly animals in a separate area. Animals (no matter how docile or good in the past) should always be monitored when around children. Lastly, knowing adult and child CPR is invaluable and could save a life!*

- **Safety Drills**

At around age three you should begin practicing home safety drills, to assure your child knows how and where to exit your home in an emergency. Draw up a plan of your home, show your children how and where to exit each room (particularly their bedroom), teach about dialing 911, designate a meeting place outside, and any jobs (older children might go next door to call 911). Then PRACTICE! Purposely set off fire alarms (so children will become familiar with the sound), teach your child about fire and fire safety: STOP - DROP & ROLL, to crawl if there is smoke, and most important not to fear firefighters - they are our friends.

***Note:** please never teach your child to fear the police or firefighters with threats like: "If you don't behave, eat, listen to me, be good, etc. , I'm going to tell that police officer (or firefighter) to get you."

- **Water Safety**

Children can be exposed to water-play as early as infancy, however, they should begin to learn water safety and be 'water safe' as a toddler. There are many accredited swim programs for children of all ages that teach basic water skills. When in or around water children should always wear the required protective devices as needed such as; water wings, ear plugs, and ski vests when rafting or boating. (boating and water safety information is plentiful thru the Dept. of Boating and Waterways). Children should never be left unattended near water, a small child can drown in an inch of water. Buckets, tubs, dishpans, plastic containers and even the toilet can be dangerous, as

small children are 'top heavy', meaning that their heads are large in proportion to the rest of their bodies. A toddler who has fallen into a toilet or bucket may not have developed the muscles in their waist or arms to be able to pull themselves out.

- **Fire Safety**

During good weather months it is natural to be out of doors: camping, bar-b-q's, picnics, etc. Please review, teach your child(ren) and practice safety around B-B-Q's, camp fires fire-pits in the home, at the beach or park. SUPERVISION at all times is imperative-- Never leave children alone near open flame. Watch your child the entire time he/she is near a fire, allowing the opportunity to provide ongoing fire education to your child AND to instantly act if your child gets too close to a flame. Read more: : <http://www.livestrong.com/article/231006-fire-safety-for-kids-while-camping/#ixzz1stpJJCBG>

- **Personal Safety** – Children should begin to learn about strangers, appropriate touching, and what to do if someone acts inappropriate to them, at an early age. Children innately trust most adults and have a hard time knowing what a stranger or 'bad person' looks like. Teach your child to trust police officers, firefighters and others in positions of authority to help them, however, if anyone makes them uncomfortable including; relatives, roommates, teachers, sitter/childcare person, religious clerics, or other people in authority, they are to yell, run, leave, etc. and get help immediately. Other forms of personal safety might include child ID cards, fingerprinting, and not labeling child's clothing, backpacks, belts, barrettes, etc. where strangers can easily read and use that information to "trick" your child into thinking they know them.

- **High-Tech Safety**

Just as you monitor and help choose appropriate television shows or movies for your child, your guidance is also needed in choosing or allowing the use of video games, computer software, and on the internet. Our children are growing up in the world of cyberspace, don't be too surprised if venturing online is at the top of your child's list of things to do. Just as you keep an eye out for inappropriate materials in real life, the same goes for cyberspace. Many online service providers offer 'parental controls' to allow parents to limit their child's access online or you may opt for 'parent-control software' available at computer stores. Keeping the computer in the family room or den rather than in the child's room helps you monitor your child's time and content on the computer.

Tweens and Teens

Too much free time can be a problem for this impressionable age, many teens need a summer job or other daily responsibilities to keep them focused and out of trouble. While a paying job may be hard to come by - consider odd jobs around the neighborhood or volunteering opportunities that match your child's interests. Many organizations welcome such requests, for example; helping at a local pet shelter or your family veterinarians office, reading to the elderly (whose eyes may be failing), library reading groups for children, assisting at a child development center, helping out at a homeless shelter or non-profit thrift store, etc.

Lastly, remember the need for safety does not end at any specific age, tweens and teens need help and monitoring to stay safe too! If your teen is good at gymnastics, dance, art, cheer-team, sports or other activities they can sign up for a summer session **or** volunteer to assist a local program. These experiences provide valuable life skills and look good on a resume!

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****** Excerpt from 'The Parenting Puzzle' by Alix L. Hall**