

“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”

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 of your family, especially young children. There are many situations each year in which children have overdosed on their parents’ drugs and medicines.

Some dangers around the home:

- Makes 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 enough 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.
- Small children should never be left alone with pets. Even trained and good natured animals can turn on them.
- Make sure that all irons, saucepans and hot drinks are kept out of the reach of children. Scalding and burns are common and avoidable accidents
- Inhaling cigarette smoke is bad for children's health. Children will be affected by passive smoking and your smoking may encourage them to smoke themselves when they are older.
- Check toys for safety marks. Ensure that your child does not play with toys that are not suitable for their age, especially if the pieces are small enough to choke on. Unsafe toys can be very dangerous.



 **Warning Signs:**
 Spend some time exploring your home as if you were a young child. This will show you the many potential dangers that, if not removed, could harm your child.

 **Action:**
 Make a list of these potential dangers and remove them to safety, or protect your child by installing safety devices. Talk to the contacts listed below if you are unsure.

 **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 reach and lock them away. Do this before your child is exposed to any hazard.

Contacts:

Talk to your Health Visitor or Midwife
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA): 0121 248 2000 www.rospace.com
Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT): 020 7608 3828 www.capt.org.uk