

# Home Safety Checklist

This is a booklet of checklists. You can use it to check your home for safety and environmental hazards. Some of the items are actions you can take, and some are about the safety of appliances and other devices you use every day. Follow as many of these tips as you can to reduce your risk of injury or illness. Tips range from mold, fire and pests to injuries, poisonings and falls. Some tips are organized by room, while some are by hazard.

## In The Kitchen

- Avoid loose, flowing clothing while cooking.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water (for at least 20 seconds) BEFORE preparing food; and AFTER using the bathroom; handling raw meats, eggs and other foods; changing a diaper; and handling pets.
- Make sure your work area has direct, even lighting: over the stove, sink, and counters, and especially where food is sliced or cut.
- Keep knives sharpened and store these and other sharp objects out of children's reach.
- Make counters and food preparation surfaces easily cleanable. Replace cutting boards when they get worn or have grooves (which don't clean well). Wash items used for preparing raw meats (surfaces, dishes, sinks, utensils) before using them for other foods. Sanitize them with a mixture of one teaspoon of liquid bleach for every quart of water.
- Keep cold foods cold, and serve hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers within two hours after cooking. Every week, toss out leftover foods from your refrigerator.
- Use refrigerator and meat thermometers to check temperatures of stored and cooked foods (you can't tell whether meat is done by the color of the liquid! Sometimes

even clear juice comes out of meat that can make you sick).

The temperature in your refrigerator should be 40°F or less.

Cooked foods should reach the temperatures listed below:

POULTRY . . . . .	165°F
LEFTOVERS . . . . .	165°F
GROUND BEEF . . . . .	158°F
PORK . . . . .	150°F
EGGS . . . . .	145°F
OTHER FOODS . . . . .	140°F

- Consider using and disposing of paper cups after each use to prevent the spread of germs, especially when someone in the house is sick.
- Use an exhaust fan over the stove to vent moisture and cooking odors (fans that vent outdoors work best, if they are allowed in your community).
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove, away from burners when cooking.
- Keep oven mitts and towels away from cooktop surfaces.
- Keep hot liquids (cups of tea, coffee, etc.) out of children's reach.
- Avoid storing items over or near the stove that might attract children (candy, cookies, etc.).
- Keep appliance cords away from the sink and stove, and do not use extension cords in the kitchen. Unplug countertop appliances when not in use.
- Make sure there are no leaks in your plumbing.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (outlets with reset buttons) for electric outlets near the sink.
- Set the hot water temperature at 120°F to reduce the chance of burns, but still kill germs when cleaning dishes. If higher temperatures are used, consider an anti-scald device.
- Store cleaning chemicals separately from food, and out of children's reach, or in cabinets secured with child safety

- latches or locks. Keep chemicals in their original containers, and never put them in plastic food containers.
- Make sure high chairs are stable, with a wide base and a tray that locks securely.
  - Use a stable stepstool with a handrail for reaching high shelves.
  - Caulk or seal cracks to prevent pests from entering.
  - Store trash in a covered container inaccessible to pests.

### **In the Bathroom**

- Use grab bars and non-skid mats in bathtubs and showers.
- Always watch young children when they are bathing.
- Unless you can ventilate by opening a window, use an exhaust fan to remove moisture from the room.
- Promptly repair any plumbing leaks, and seal or caulk cracks.
- Avoid scalds by setting the hot water temperature to 120°F or using an anti-scald device in the bathroom.
- Unplug small electrical appliances such as hair dryers, shavers, curling irons and radios when not in use, and be sure they are not used near water in sinks or tubs.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (outlets with reset buttons) for electric outlets in the bathroom.
- Clearly mark all medicines and store them in the containers they came in.
- Be sure all medicine bottles have child-resistant caps (ask for specially designed, easier opening caps if you have trouble opening these bottles).
- Store medicines and vitamins beyond children's reach, and dispose of them properly when outdated.
- Install and use a night light.

### **In The Bedroom**

- Place lamps, light switches or flashlights within reach of each bed.

- Keep a telephone next to the bed, with emergency numbers (doctor, police, poison control center) on or near the telephone.
- Keep fire sources, such as ash trays, smoking materials, heaters, hot plates, etc., well away from beds and bedding.
- NEVER smoke in bed!
- Do not cover or fold electric blankets when using them. "Tucking in" an electric blanket can cause heat buildup and start a fire.
- Place carbon monoxide and smoke detectors near the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area in the house.

### **In The Nursery**

- Only use cribs with slats no more than 2 and 3/8 inches apart, and with no missing or loose slats.
- Check older cribs for lead paint, and only use them if there is no lead.
- Check the crib mattress for a snug fit: no more than a two finger gap should be present between the mattress and railing.
- Make sure the corner posts are flush with the side rails.
- Place cribs away from drapery cords or venetian blind cords to prevent strangulation.
- Do not use pillows. Place an infant on his or her back for sleeping or on the side, not on the stomach.
- Prevent falls from changing tables, beds and other high surfaces with safety straps or guard rails.
- Make sure the toy chest has a lightweight lid, no lid, or a safe closing hinge.

## Throughout The House

- Tack down small rugs and runners, or choose slip resistant rugs.
- Clear all high-traffic areas, especially hallways and passageways between rooms. Check for obstructions such as furniture and boxes, and make sure these areas are well lit.
- Do not place electrical, telephone or other wires or cords in walkways through the room.
- Post emergency numbers on or near each telephone.
- Caulk and seal openings to keep mice and other pests from entering the home.
- Consider not smoking inside the home, especially if any residents are children, pregnant, or have respiratory problems.
- Supply enough fresh air throughout the house to prevent moisture buildup and remove stale air. Make sure at least one window in each room opens.
- Look for and correct any damp areas in the home which can attract pests or allow mold to grow. Repair roof and plumbing leaks, and discard damp rugs, furniture and building materials. Clean up any standing water, such as the refrigerator drip pan and areas under leaky sinks.
- Vent clothes dryers to the outdoors using a flexible metal vent. Remove lint from the dryer after every use to prevent fire, and clean dust and lint from the vent every six months.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector and smoke detectors according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors twice a year to be sure they're working properly; clean them both times to keep dust from interfering with the sensor. Use a vacuum cleaner hose or hair dryer to remove dust and debris that may have settled inside the alarm.

- Have your gas or oil company or an experienced professional inspect your heating and gas appliances each year.
- Clean your heating vents and/or registers regularly.
- Do not disturb painted surfaces which may contain lead paint without first taking proper precautions. Use a remodeling method that minimizes the amount of lead dust.

## **Electrical Safety**

- Do not run cords beneath furniture or rugs.
- Check electrical cords for fraying or cracking, and repair or replace them.
- Be careful when using extension cords. Overloaded cords can start a fire. Too many items on a cord can overload it, and some appliances should only be used with thicker, heavy-duty cords.
- For added protection, use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) power strips for multiple outlets instead of extension cords.
- Be sure all outlets and switches have cover plates.
- Use plastic "shock-stop" outlet plugs in all unused electrical outlets if there are toddlers in the house; keep electrical cords out of the reach of small children.
- Never nail or staple wiring to walls or baseboards.
- Use only the sizes and types of light bulbs recommended by the manufacturer for lamps and fixtures so they do not overheat.
- Keep a bulb in all light fixtures (even a burned-out bulb) to reduce the risk of electric shock.
- Place electrical space heaters away from furniture and curtains. Never leave a child alone in a room with a space heater. Be sure they are properly grounded (three-prong plug) and are connected directly to wall outlets.
- If fuses are used, always use the correct size for the circuit. Never use coins. The fuse box should be labeled. If it's a 15-

amp circuit, use only a 15-amp fuse. Anything higher is a fire hazard.

## **In The Basement/Garage/Lowest Floor Level**

- Install a carbon monoxide detector.
- Test for radon levels. To learn how to test and keep radon below the level of concern, call your local health department or the NYS Health Department.
- Seal utility openings and sump pits to reduce radon and pest infiltration.
- Dry out wet basements to lower the chance of coughs, colds or allergies from molds and mildews.
- Do not disturb asbestos insulation; plan home remodeling projects so that asbestos and lead-based paint are not disturbed.
- Place lights so they can be turned on without walking through a dark area.
- Be sure all work areas are well lit.
- Properly ground all power tools (three-prong plug) and make sure they have guards in place. Always follow the manufacturer's directions when using power tools.
- Have and use protective eyewear when running power tools.
- Store household chemicals, including pesticides and pool chemicals, out of the reach of children.
- Keep containers of volatile liquids, such as paints and cleaning solvents, tightly capped. Store them away from ignition sources, such as furnaces and water heaters; never use them near these sources. **ALWAYS STORE GASOLINE IN A CONTAINER LABELED FOR GASOLINE USE, AND NEVER IN THE HOME!**
- Use latches to keep small children out of the garage and basement where many dangerous items are often stored.

## **On Stairways**

- Use toddler gates at the top and bottom of stairs if there are small children. Old-fashioned, "accordion-style" gates should not be used.
- Never store items on the stairway, even temporarily.
- NEVER leave items with wheels (walkers, skates, toy trucks) near the tops of stairs.
- Use light switches at both the top and bottom of staircases; make sure the stairs are well lit.
- Use sturdy handrails fastened securely on both sides of the stairway. They should run continuously from the top to the bottom of the stairway.
- Be sure that steps allow firm footing; with no worn treads or loose carpeting. Steps should be even and of the same size and height.
- Make sure the edges of steps are easy to see.

## **Fire Safety**

- Install at least one smoke detector on every floor of the house, including one near each sleeping area. Do not place one in the kitchen.
- Check your smoke detectors twice a year to be sure they're working properly; clean them both times to keep dust from interfering with the sensor. Use a vacuum cleaner hose or hair dryer to remove dust and debris that may have settled inside the alarm.
- Install special smoke detectors (strobe lights) for the hearing-impaired if needed.
- Teach all family members, including children, how to "stop, drop and roll" to put out flames if clothes catch fire.
- ALWAYS keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Safely dispose of matches, lighters and butts. (Remember, cigarette smoking is unhealthy for EVERYONE in the house, including children!)



- Place small heaters and stoves where they can't be tipped over, and away from furnishings and flammable materials such as curtains and rugs.
- Use space heaters according to the manufacturer's instructions for safe installation, operation and maintenance.
- Comply with fire codes in your community when placing space heaters.
- Make sure space heaters are inaccessible to small children.
- Have an emergency exit plan and AN ALTERNATE ROUTE mapped out in case of fire, and practice it regularly with the whole family.
- In case of a fire, crawl out. Smoke is pushed up, and is more deadly than fire.
- Keep towels, curtains and other flammable materials away from space heaters, stoves and fireplaces.
- If you heat with wood, be sure woodburning equipment is installed properly, inspected often for buildup and debris, and inaccessible to small children.
- Inspect and clean your chimney every year.
- Have electrical wiring installed or inspected by a professional electrician.

## **Home Security**

- Make sure the outside of your home is well lit.
- Be sure locks are secure.
- Consider using dogs to help watch your home.
- Participate in your community's neighborhood watch program.
- Firearms in the home can injure a family member as well as an intruder. If you decide to keep a gun in your home, take these precautions: attend a firearm safety course; store the gun unloaded and disassembled; use a trigger lock; keep the gun in a locked drawer or cabinet; keep the key out of

children's reach; and keep ammunition in a separate, locked place.

## **In The Yard**

- Wear gloves or wash your hands after yard work or handling bird feeders, especially before handling food.
- Use a floor mat at each entry way to catch dirt from shoes.
- Provide lighting for entry and exit after dark.
- Keep walkways level and clear of ice and snow.
- Keep all stairs, protective walls, railings, porches and balconies in sturdy condition and good repair.
- Install safety railings on decks, porches, and other areas where children can fall.
- Remove dead or dying trees that could lose limbs or fall during storms.
- Identify and remove bee/wasp nests and poisonous plants (such as poison ivy).
- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (outlets with reset buttons) for outside use.
- All in-ground swimming pools must be fenced, at least four feet high with self-closing, self-latching gates. Access to above-ground pools must also be limited. Check with your building inspector about ways to protect your above-ground pool. If you have young children, be certain other pools in the neighborhood are also protected.
- Never swim alone or unsupervised. Learn CPR if you have a pool.
- Securely anchor swing sets and jungle gyms. Use low-impact foundation materials - such as pea gravel, wood mulch or chips - and choose sets with rounded edges. Check equipment regularly and repair as needed. Always supervise children when they are using equipment.
- Keep sandboxes covered to keep cats and other animals from using them as a litter box.

- Seed bare spots on the lawn or cover with sod.
- Reduce the number of mosquitoes by getting rid of pools of standing water (old tires, birdbaths, rain gutters, etc.)

### **Extra Tips For Homes With Small Children**

- Block children's access to windows, and be sure they have window guards.
- Keep small items and foods that could choke a child out of reach.
- Keep pocketbooks with potentially dangerous items, such as medicine, vitamins, birth control pills, cigarettes, matches and lighters, jewelry and calculators (which contain easy-to swallow, poisonous batteries) out of children's reach.
- Keep lead-based paint in good condition - chipping or peeling paint is a hazard for young children. Use safe paint removal practices.
- Keep all plants out of children's reach (some plants, such as poinsettia, azalea, caladium, rhododendron, philodendron and mistletoe are poisonous).
- Buy cleaners in child-resistant packaging whenever possible; do not transfer to other containers. Never store non-food items such as cleaners or bleach in food containers.
- Post the number for a local poison control center on or near the telephone.
- Have syrup of ipecac in the house - just in case it's needed to induce vomiting (ipecac should **not** be used until a poison control center or physician has been consulted).
- In the car, buckle children under the age of 12 in the back seat, away from the air bag. Use car seats and booster seats for younger children as appropriate.
- Keep bicycles in good repair, with adequate brakes and reflectors, and a working light or reflective clothing for night-time riding.

- Be sure that all bicyclists wear helmets that meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission standards for every ride.
- Carefully consider how a new pet and a small child might react to each other.
- Empty cleaning buckets, wading pools, and any other containers that can hold water. Young children can drown in even tiny amounts of water.

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