

Babyproofing Your Home

It's never too early to "babyproof" your home for their own safety. Babies are curious beings, and they gain mobility more quickly than you can imagine. Of course, newborns aren't able to get into mischief. But don't get complacent, because the fun begins within four to five short months when they start to scoot and crawl.

Take a baby's eye view

Getting down on all fours and crawling around your home may feel silly, but it can save your little one's life. Imagine yourself as your child, where everything in the world is shiny, new and worth exploration—as well as yummy enough to go in your mouth.

Start with the floor

Paper clips, straight pins and other small objects are hard for an adult to spot when standing upright. Babies are great at spotting small things up close, so take care to spot and remove anything from the floor that you would not want them putting in their mouths.

Use a cardboard toilet roll as a measurement. Any item small enough to fit inside is a hazard for your child. That includes the plastic end caps on doorstops. Replace the whole thing with a one-piece design. Clutter, dust and messes on the floor can carry harmful bacteria, so make a point of keeping the floor clean.

Get the lead out

If your home was built before 1978, it's likely that the paint on the walls and window sills contains varying amounts of lead, which can cause serious health problems and learning disabilities. Homes that were built before 1960 are at especially high risk.

Although you may think that your child is safe if the paint is not flaking off, high concentrations of lead are commonly found in dust and dirt in and around an older home, and its sweet taste is attractive to small children.

Use a wet rag or mop and a high phosphate cleaning solution to remove dust, and begin having your baby tested for lead when they are between 6-9 months old. Contact a professional about removing the lead from your home.

Secure electrical outlets and cords

Electrical outlets that are not in use and can be reached by your child should have covers on them. Those that are being used should be blocked from access. Use baby-safe outlet covers. The cheap plastic ones can be pried out by little fingers.

Move electrical cords out of reach to avoid any potential risks of shock or strangling, and to keep them from pulling down a heavy object like a lamp or television.

Install ground fault circuit interrupters on outlets near sinks and bathtubs. These will help protect the whole family against accidents with wet appliances.



Watch the windows

Don't open a window that is low enough for a baby to reach more than six inches, so the baby can't fall or throw something out of it. Also make sure that the window cannot close and smash the baby's fingers.

Shorten drapery & blind cords. Long cords can be both a strangulation risk, and their plastic ends can be a choking hazard.

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Remove or cover sharp edges

Think about replacing that square or rectangular coffee table with an oval or round one, and forget about glass tops. If you can live without a coffee table, that would be even better for your little one to scoot around on the floor.

If these options are out of the question, buy safety guards and cushioned strips. Don't forget to pad the area around the fireplace if it's made of tile or brick. Place screened barriers around radiators, space heaters and the fireplace itself.

Protect against spills

Secure bookcases, entertainment centers, and other large pieces with a high center of gravity to your walls, so they can't topple over. Position your television, stereo and other A/V equipment so your child can't pull them down.

Get rid of any tables, chairs or other pieces of furniture that are wobbly or otherwise unstable. Keep dresser drawers closed at all times. Babies love to pull and climb, especially when they are learning to crawl and walk.

Speaking of spills, apply a stain guard to protect upholstered furniture and carpets.

Get baby gates

Baby gates are great investments for areas that don't have doors. The safest ones are plastic with solid panels. Avoid those with rails in which babies can get their heads or hands stuck. If you find an old accordion-style baby gate at a yard sale or in a family member's attic, don't even consider using it. They are a dangerous strangulation hazard, which is why they are no longer made.

Use hardware-mounted gates at the top and bottom of stairways with two or more steps, since pressure-mounted models may not be strong enough.

Move your house plants

A potted plant is the perfect playground for babies and toddlers. It's best for the both of you to find a new home for any plants you have on the floor or low tables for the time being.

Also, be aware that some house plants are toxic. Know the names and health risks of your plants in case your child does manage to make a snack of one.

Avoid kitchen hazards

Kitchens are the most dangerous room in the house for babies and small children. Never leave your baby unattended on the kitchen floor. Even if you are with them, you can't be too careful.

Secure your bottom cabinet doors with baby-proof locks. This is especially important to keep your little one from getting into cleaning supplies or sharp appliances.

Clear off the refrigerator magnets. No matter how cute they are, they do fall off from time to time, and they will find their way into your child's mouth.

Close bathroom doors

Bathrooms are the second most dangerous place for a baby or toddler. Medicine cabinets, showers, tubs, faucets and bathroom chemicals are not baby-friendly. Toilets are a drowning hazard. Get in the habit of keeping your bathroom door shut.

Pitch the poison

Especially as your child starts walking and climbing, it's best to lock all potentially dangerous substances in an upper-level, secured cabinet. Some examples include alcoholic beverages, household cleaning and laundry supplies, both prescription and non-prescription drugs and vitamins, paint, kerosene, gasoline, charcoal, lighter fluid, bug spray, pesticides, and fertilizers. Even mommy's make-up and daddy's toiletries can be toxic to a little one.

Keep a bottle of Ipecac and activated charcoal in your home, but only use it under medical supervision.

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Toys are taboo

Get a plastic container to use a "baby toy box" to store only their toys. Keep your older children's toys out of the baby's room and common areas, so your little one isn't tempted by small parts. This would be a good time to teach your older children to put their toys away.



Turn down the water heater

Set the water heater at a lower temperature to lessen the risk of burns from hot running water, with the added bonus of saving on utility bills.

In case of emergency

Make sure every room in the house is equipped with a working smoke and carbon monoxide detector. Program emergency numbers for your pediatrician, the local poison control center, emergency room, spouse and others into your phone's speed dial, and keep a list posted on the refrigerator for easy reference by caregivers.

Pay attention

You may think you've covered everything, but you can never totally accident proof your home. Make sure the baby is in your sight at all times and try not to let your attention be diverted away for long periods of time.

This includes your front yard, back yard and your car. Always know exactly where your child is before backing out of your driveway.

Don't leave your baby alone with a toddler or preschooler, because they may unintentionally end up hurting the baby. Of course, it's ok to leave your baby alone if they are sleeping in a playpen or crib.

Change your habits

For your baby's sake, now is the time to stop emptying the change in your pockets onto the living room table or leaving an iron or radio with the cords dangling from a high place. Find a jar or piggy bank for the loose change and start wrapping those cords up and putting appliances away.

Safety over style

Yes, there's a lot to think about, and your house will likely not be winning any style awards for the next few years, but protecting your child is worth it.

Stop by your local [Baby Product Experts certified store](#) for more safety tips and products for babyproofing your home.

Baby Product Experts specialty stores provide safe, quality products and expert advice.