

Audit Your Home for Safety

Most accidents happen at home. If you think your house is “home, safe home,” take a look around. At first glance it may look orderly, but certain common trouble spots can lead to cuts, falls, burns, or other injuries. The following room-by-room checklist can alert you to accidents waiting to happen.

Kitchen

- Cleaners and dangerous chemicals should be stored out of children’s reach.
- Scissors, knives, ice picks, and other sharp tools should be stored separately from other utensils out of the reach of children.
- Towels, curtains, and other flammable materials should hang a safe distance from heat sources like the stove.
- Kitchen fans and stove ventilation exhausts should be clean and in good working order.
- Electrical cords should run a safe distance from the sink or range.
- Electrical outlets should not be overloaded.
- A sturdy step stool should be available to help reach high cabinets.
- Vinyl floors should be cleaned with nonskid wax.
- A nonskid floor mat should be in place in front of the sink.
- The kitchen should be well-lit.

Bedroom

- Electrical cords should be tucked away from foot traffic and in good working order.
- Electrical outlets should not be overloaded.
- Electric blankets should not be covered by bedspreads or other blankets when in use.
- Carpeting should be secured to the floor.
- A night-light should be situated between the bed and the bathroom or hallway.
- The bedroom telephone should be easy to reach, even from the floor, if necessary.
- Ashtrays, irons, electric hair curlers, and other potential fire hazards should be located away from bedding, curtains, or other flammable material.
- Smoke detectors should be located near entrances to rooms.

Bathroom

- ___ Floor mats should have nonskid backing.
- ___ Rubber mats or adhesive-backed strips should be in place in the bathtub or shower stall.
- ___ A support bar should be securely installed in the bathtub or shower stall.
- ___ Hair dryers, electric shavers, or other electric appliances should be kept away from water and unplugged when not in use.
- ___ A light switch should be located near the bathroom entrance or entrances.

Halls and Stairs

- ___ Halls and stairs should be well-lit, with a light switch at each end of a stairway.
- ___ If a staircase is dimly lit, the top and bottom steps should be marked with reflective tape.
- ___ Sturdy hand rails should be securely installed on both sides of each stairway.
- ___ Floor covering on stairs and in halls should be skid-proof or carpeted and not creased or frayed.
- ___ Stairways should be clear of shoes, books, toys, tools, or other clutter.
- ___ When young children are in the house, gates should block access to stairways.

Basement and Garage

- ___ To avoid confusion and misuse, all chemicals and cleaners should be kept in their original containers.
- ___ Hazardous chemicals should be kept under lock and key or out of reach of children.
- ___ Sharp or otherwise potentially hazardous tools should be in good working order.
- ___ Gasoline and other flammable materials should be stored in airtight containers and away from heat sources (outside the home, if possible).
- ___ To prevent suffocation, dispose of all plastic bags, or keep them out of reach of children.
- ___ Don't leave objects small enough to be swallowed within reach of children.

A Year of Health Hints:
Be Smart, Be Safe

- ___ Buy a radon test kit from your state department of health or department of environmental protection, or contact the National Radon Hotline at 1.800.767.7236 for information on radon testing. (Radon is an invisible gas that causes health problems if it builds up in homes and can't escape.) If your home has high radon levels, hire a reliable radon expert to help you reduce levels of this gas in your home.

Elsewhere around the House

- ___ Outdoor porches and walkways should be kept clear of ice in winter weather.
- ___ Window screens should be securely fastened, especially if small children are around.

Take steps to remedy unsafe situations as soon as possible.