

# KIDDIE-PROOFING YOUR HOME



## • Some Not-So-Obvious Safety Tips!

It's amazing that those of us from prior generations survived our childhoods without all of the safety products available for today's kids. However, nobody can argue the fact that "kiddie proofing" your home does reduce the occurrence of common household accidents. Still, the best way to childproof your home is to watch your child at all times. That is, unfortunately, virtually impossible. This is where safety products come in to play to help keep your itty-bitty one safe a little bit longer, while your eyes move to the back of your head.

Now, we all know about the more common household dangers, such as poisonous cleaners behind unlatched cabinets, or a swimming pool behind an unlocked gate. So, let's instead explore some of the less common hazards that you may not have already childproofed your home against.

A couple of frightening things have actually happened recently in my own home. One morning, while my two-year-old daughter was still sleeping, a heavy shelf fell off her wall and landed on her

"big girl" bed, which she was, thankfully, not yet using. The use of mollies and lack of heavy objects on the shelf apparently were not enough of a safety precaution. No matter where they are located, child-accessible shelving units, as well as bookcases and tall dressers, really should be anchored into a stud. If a stud is not available, use a toggle bolt, which has wings that pop open and brace against the drywall back as the screw tightens.


The second scare was actually worse. We all came home one night after being out and discovered that the knob on the stove had been accidentally turned just enough to push it into the "ignite" position where the gas leaks out, but not enough to light it. The first safety recommendation for this particular situation is to simply remove any front-mounted stove knobs when you are not cooking to prevent them from inadvertently being turned on. If you are in the position of choosing a new stove, be sure to look for top-mounted knobs that are at the rear of the cook top. And, secondly, if your home uses gas and you



don't already have a carbon monoxide detector, look for a model with dual electric and battery power modes. Be sure to avoid my mistake, by testing it every six months to ensure that it is still functioning.

Here are a few more safety tips that aren't always at the top of the list with the obvious cabinet latches, outlet plugs and stair gates. Wire clothes hangers are also very dangerous and have been the cause for many children to lose eyes, or to be severely wounded. Plastic hangers should always be used, not only in a child's closet, but yours as well. Also, to help prevent falls, use scatter rugs with non-slip backings, and never use them at the top of stairs.

Use safety precautions outside your home too! Do not use a child seat that has been involved in an accident. It will be very difficult to know if the seat's integrity has been preserved. Your insurance agent should accept the seat for proper disposal, and may even reimburse you for a new car seat.

All of these safety precautions, as well as most others, are inexpensive (or free!) and easy to implement. Anything you need can be found at home improvement stores, baby equipment shops, supermarkets, drug or linen stores, and through mail order catalogues. Although you could fill your home with child safety products from top to bottom, remember, there is nothing on the market that works as well, or is as inexpensive, as your own two eyes! 

—Elizabeth Morabito



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