

# Home and Airway Protection

## Protecting Baby's Airway

Most recent studies regarding Sudden Infant Death Syndrome reveal that the children at highest risk for dying from SIDS are those babies less than 1 year of age who sleep with pillows, blankets or other unsafe bedding. In addition, co-sleeping in bed with Parents has been shown to increase the risk of SIDS death by 50% over all. This does not include parents who roll onto their baby causing suffocation, but rather it is believed that the increased amount of carbon dioxide in the air exhaled from Parents while sleeping decreases the amount of oxygen babies breathe in causing death.

Other causes associated with increased SIDS risk are:

- sleeping on the stomach
- young mothers
- smoking mothers
- poor or no prenatal care
- low birth weight (also associated with smoking parent)
- overheating
- lung or heart disease
- congenital syndromes.

## Protecting Your Family

There are two steps everyone can take to protect children at home.

First, **childproof** your home. The best way to find dangers your child might encounter is to explore your home at her level – by getting down on your hands and knees. Cover every room, asking yourself what looks tempting and what is within reach (between the floor and about 40 inches above). Also, check carpets for buried dangers like pins or coins.

Second, understand that childproofing can never be 100 percent effective. That's why it's so important to **supervise** your children at all times, especially around water, in the kitchen and bathroom, and wherever known hazards exist.

### Childproofing Basics

#### In the kitchen:

- Keep hot foods and liquids away from young children. The vast majority (95 percent) of burns among children are scald burns. Burns are typically caused by spilling hot liquids or food, and injuries are primarily associated with the trunk or the face.
- Use the back burners on the stove and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- Keep glassware, knives, appliance cords, placemats and tablecloths out of reach and away from the edge of counters and tables. If your child is visiting someone else's home, ensure dangerous items are stored out of reach during your child's stay.

#### In the bathroom:

- Set the thermostat of your hot water heater no higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit to reduce the chance of scald burns. It takes just three seconds for a child to sustain a third degree burn from water at 140 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Lock medicine cabinets. Even items as seemingly harmless as iron pills and mouthwash can be dangerous for a young child.
- Install toilet locks. Unlike adults, children's weight is concentrated in the top half of their bodies. When they lean into a toilet bowl, they may lose their balance, fall forward and drown in as little as 1 inch of water.

- Request child-resistant packaging. But keep in mind that child-resistant containers are not childproof. These medicines still need to be locked up out of a child's reach.
- Remove sharp utensils and appliances. Razors, scissors and blow dryers are better kept in an adult's bedroom, locked out of children's reach.

#### **In the bedroom:**

- Beware of old cribs. Baby furniture built even a decade ago might not meet some of today's safety standards. Sharp edges, corner post protrusions and dangerously spaced slats can be deadly.
- Keep cribs and low-standing furniture (beds, bookshelves, toy boxes, chairs) away from windows, preferably against another wall.
- Infants and toddlers can pull on inner or "lift" cords of window blinds creating loops large enough to pull around their necks and strangle. The problem occurs when a corded window blind or shade is lowered but not locked into position. This leaves a small amount of slack on the inner cord and the child can pull it around her neck. Always lock blinds whether they are up or down.
- Window blinds sold after November 2000 have attachments on the pull cord so the inner cords can't form a loop. If you purchased your blinds before that date or are not sure, install cord stops on the outer pull cord to prevent the child from pulling on the inner blind cord (click on the web link below to see pictures).
- Window blinds made before 1995 have outer pull cords that end in a loop. If you have cords that are attached at the bottom that form a loop, cut the cord above the tassel, remove the buckle, and add a safety tassel at the end of each cord (click on the web link below to see pictures).
- Looped pull cords on vertical blinds and some draperies cannot be cut and still operate. A tie-down device or cleat must be used to reduce a child's access to the loop.
- When purchasing new window coverings make sure they meet current safety standards and do not have looped pull cords or inner cords that can be pulled to form a loop. Consider purchasing cordless window coverings.
- Free window safety kits that include safety tassels tie-down devices and cord stops are available for consumers. Click on the link below for the Window Covering Safety Council. The web site has simple pictures and instructions for installing safety devices to make your window cords safe. You can also call the WCSC at 1-800-506-4636.

#### **Around the house:**

- Check for fire hazards. Look for frayed electrical wires or flammable materials near heat sources such as space heaters. Never run electrical cords under rugs. Make sure that your home, and any home your child visits, has working smoke alarms in every sleeping area and on every level.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors in every sleeping area and check batteries often. Exposure to even low levels of this poisonous gas can be fatal to a small child.
- Use safety gates. Stair falls tend to result in severe injuries. Use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs to keep infants and toddlers out of harm's way.
- Cover all unused electrical outlets.
- If firearms are kept in the house, keep them locked, unloaded and stored out of reach. Secure ammunition in a separate, locked location.
- Install window guards on all windows that are not emergency exits. Window guards can be purchased at your local hardware store.
- Young children love to climb on furniture and use drawers and shelves as steps. **However, children can sustain crush injuries as furniture can easily tip over on them.** Secure bookcases, shelving, and heavy furniture to walls with brackets and anchors. When storing items, put heavier items on bottom shelves and in bottom drawers.
- Large items such as TV's, microwaves, fish tanks and appliances can topple off stands and fall on children. Use broad-based carts for TV's and appliances. Secure carts and appliances to walls. Avoid using pedestal tables to hold heavy items.
- Supervise children and toddlers at all times around furniture.

#### **For emergencies:**

- Post emergency numbers by telephones. Post phone numbers for the poison control center, pediatrician, police, fire department, emergency medical services and a neighbor by every telephone. Also, clearly post the home address so that parents, caregivers, and children can easily tell emergency personnel how to locate the home.
- Keep first aid supplies on hand.

#### **PREVENTION TIPS**

- Place an infant on her back on a firm, flat crib mattress in a crib that meets national safety standards. Remove pillows, comforters, toys and other soft products from the crib. Never hang anything on or above a crib with string or ribbon longer than 7 inches.
- Always supervise young children while they are eating and playing. Do not allow children under age 6 to eat small, round or hard foods, including hot dogs. Keep small items such as safety pins, jewelry and buttons out of children's reach. Learn first aid and CPR.
- Ensure that children play with age-appropriate toys, as indicated by safety labels. Inspect old and new toys regularly for damage. Consider purchasing a small parts tester to determine whether or not small toys and objects in your home may present a choking hazard to young children.
- Remove hood and neck drawstrings from all children's outerwear. To prevent strangulation, never allow children to wear necklaces, purses, scarves or clothing with drawstrings while on playgrounds.
- Tie up all window blind and drapery cords, or cut the ends and retrofit with safety tassels. The inner cords of blinds should be fitted with cord stops. Never place a crib near a window.
- Do not allow a child under age 6 to sleep on the top bunk of a bunk bed. Ensure that all spaces between the guardrail and bed frame, and all spaces in the head and foot boards, are less than 3.5 inches.

<http://www.usa.safekids.org>

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/sudden-infant-death-syndrome-sids-beyond-the-basics/abstract/1?utdPopup=true>

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/sudden-infant-death-syndrome-sids-beyond-the-basics/abstract/2?utdPopup=true>

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