

Child Safety During Corona

As we deal with the coronavirus, the educational system is shut down and the kids are spending long hours at home. The house becomes the main playground and the children are more restless than ever. How can you protect your children from the potential dangers inside your house and make staying at home safe?



Creating a Safe Home Environment

All children fall or get hurt sometimes, and it's wrong to keep them from activities to prevent them from getting hurt. Kids are naturally active and curious, and this is an important part of their growing process. Still, the "Beterem" organization's report for 2013 explains that most children who arrive at the emergency room or are hospitalized are there as a result of accidents that took place at home. Most of these injuries can be avoided by planning ahead and making the house child-proof. It's important for you to know what the dangers and common causes for child injuries in the house are so that you'll be able to protect your children and adopt safety habits that will prevent serious accidents and injuries. This is how you can make your home a safe and creative place where your children can play and explore.

Other than child-proofing your home, remember that babies and children require constant supervision. When your child grows and develops you need to look out for new dangers, and you should also teach them what's safe and what isn't. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers in an easily accessible and prominent place, or on your cellphone. Learn and practice emergency procedures, like resuscitation or removing a foreign object. Magen David Adom stations in Israel, as well as other organizations, offer resuscitation and first aid courses for a symbolic price. Keep a first aid kit available.

You can check the house and environment's fit to children with a detailed questionnaire, courtesy of 'Beterem'. To download the questionnaire from the 'Beterem' website- click here.

Falls and Injuries

Falling is the most common cause for accidents among babies, toddlers and children. As your child develops, it's important to understand the new skills they're learning and prepare and adjust the environment accordingly. There are three factors that have an effect on the severity of the injury as a result of a fall: the height fallen from, the surface fallen on to (hard surfaces as opposed to soft surfaces) and what the child might hit when they fall (furniture with sharp edges etc.).

Notice: Never leave a baby in a high place without supervision. If you need to take your eyes off the baby, hold on to them with one hand. Falling from a meter and half is considered dangerous until the age of five. With older kids, don't allow access to over two meters.

Here are a few practical steps that you can take to protect your children from falls and injuries in the house:

General

- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Be careful with slippery floors, and do a good job wiping up water that spilled on the floor.
- If you have a pool, install a fence and a gate with an automatic lock that meets the Israeli Standards Institute's standards for home swimming pools.
- Make sure to install blocked electric outlets or caps for them.

Furniture

- Secure closets and heavy furniture to the wall.
- Store the children's things on lower shelves, and teach them that they're not allowed to climb onto shelves.
- Move furniture away that has sharp corners or pad the corners.
- Check that folding furniture includes a locking mechanism so that it doesn't collapse while being used.

Windows

- Lock windows, especially on high floors, and install permanent window gratings. Blinds do not prevent children from falling out of windows.
- Don't put furniture next to windows, like beds, chairs or plants, so that the kids don't climb on them and reach the window.
- Teach your child to play far away from windows, and always keep an eye on them while they're playing.

Balcony

- Make sure the doors leading to the balcony are always closed so that your child doesn't go out to the balcony on their own.
- Install a safety gate at the entrance to the balcony.
- Check that the safety railings on the balcony are safe: the railing's height should be at least one meter, and not have horizontal poles so that a foot can't be placed on them to climb.
- Make sure there aren't any items around that your child can use to climb.
- In any case, watch over your child when they're on the balcony.
- Sharp Objects
- Place sharp objects like scissors, knives or shaving knives in a locked draw or a high place.
- Store food processors after using them. Disconnect electric appliances sitting on the counter from the electricity.
- Move tools away and lock them in a safe place. Only use them when your child isn't around and make sure to disconnect them from the electricity and place them in a safe place during every break.

Glass

- Allow your child to use plastic dishes and not glass.
- Put stickers on glass doors or railings at the child's height so that they don't accidentally try running through them.
- Use safety glass or a clear window sticker to avoid shattering.
- Avoid using glass furniture when there are young children in the house.
- When glass breaks, move the child away and thoroughly clean the area.

Poisoning

Poisoning is one of the most common causes for young children's injuries. The sources of the poisons are usually chemicals found in a home, like cleaning materials and medicine. Kids might walk over to a poisonous material without us noticing. Being aware of materials that can be dangerous will allow you to prepare ahead and protect your children. As soon as you suspect a poisoning incident, take the container and the child and call the national Poison Information Center, at 04-7771900, to consult and receive essential information for first aid.

Medications

Medications are the main cause for poisonings amongst young children, causing 70% of poisoning cases. It's important to know that almost all medications, including vitamins and plant-based medications, are poisonous when consumed in large quantities. So, install a closet that can be locked and store your medications in it. Also store sprays, hair products and other poisons out of children's reach. It's recommended not to take medications when your child is around so that they don't try imitating you. If your child still sees them explain that they are medications, avoid calling them "special candy" or similar nicknames. When you need to give your child medication make sure you know the correct dose, and coordinate with your partner to avoid double dosing. Always supervise your child when they're taking medication! Avoid distractions.

Cleaning materials

Kids can surprise you and swallow cleaning materials in a moment when you're distracted. When you clean, make sure to put the container in a safe place, where you can always see it. Avoid using food and drink containers for cleaning materials, not even for a short time. Don't put chemicals like paint thinners or pesticides in soft drink bottles, and don't pour them into cups. When you're done using them, store dangerous materials in a safe place, at least one and half meters high and in a closet that can be locked. Make sure to always lock and put away cleaning materials, even ones being used daily, especially those that can look like candy to your children, like dishwasher or washing machine tablets.

Burns

Burns are among the common causes for children's hospitalization and visits to the emergency room. Secure the house and follow safety rules to reduce the chance of your child suffering burn injuries. Still, the most efficient way to keep your child from getting burned is to carefully supervise them, especially when there are hot drinks, heaters or other hot equipment around.

How can the house be prepared?

- Install a smoke detector in your home.
- Always purchase furniture and fabrics that are less flammable.
- Choose safe heating utilities that are fit for children - use a radiator or air conditioner and not a space heater.
- Lower the thermostat and limit the heat of the water in the faucets to no more than 50 degrees.
- Purchase a standardized water boiler with a screw-on top.
- Don't use electric sheets.
- Lock matches and lighters in a high place.

What needs attention during routine times?

- When you're cooking, turn and point pot and pan handles towards the wall.
- Don't leave the kitchen unsupervised when there are hot dishes in it.
- On Shabbat, make sure to place the water boiler far from children's reach. Place the water boiler so the faucet faces sideways. Don't move the water boiler when it's full of hot water.
- The Shabbat hot plate also needs to be placed somewhere high up and away from children's reach.
- Install a safety gate around a source of heat like a fireplace or a tabun.
- Keep at least a meter of distance from heaters: move clothing, toys, carpets and tablecloths away.
- Iron clothing only when the children are asleep or in a playpen. Let the iron cool down in a high place.
- Always check the bath water temperature before letting your child near it.
- Be especially careful with hot drinks. Don't drink hot beverages when you're holding your child. Keep the cup away from children's reach and make sure to place it at the center of the table and not on the edge.

How should burns be treated?

Call an ambulance if the burn is larger than your child's hand, or is on their face, neck or crotch. If you aren't sure about the severity of the burn, contact a doctor, hospital or medical center immediately.

When possible, provide first aid as follows:

1. Take the child to a safe place and make sure there's no danger of further injury.
2. Remove clothing (only if it doesn't stick to the skin!), watches and jewelry (if this can be done without causing pain or further injury).
3. Cool the injured area with running water only, for 20 minutes. Hold the child and console them.
4. Cover the area with a light and loose bandage that doesn't stick. Raise the limb that suffered the burn.

Seek medical treatment at a clinic, hospital or call center if the burn's surface is 20 cm or more, if the skin in the burn area looks exposed, infected, or covered in bubbles, or if the burn looks deep, even if the child doesn't feel pain. Seek medical attention also in cases where the pain doesn't pass or gets worse.

What shouldn't you do?

- Don't peel clothing stuck to a burn.
- Don't pop blisters.
- Don't put ice, cold water, lotion, ointments, creams, oils or powders on the burn. Butter or flower can make things worse. To properly treat a burn all these need to be removed.
- If the burn's surface is large, don't cool it for more than 20 minutes. Kids can suffer from hypothermia very quickly.