Household Safety
Objectives

- Statistics on household safety
- Common injuries and accidents at home
- Falls
- Poisoning
- Fires and burns
- Choking and suffocation
- Environmental hazards
- Drowning
- Additional hazards
- Emergency preparedness
Did you know....

✓ More accidents happen at home than anywhere else
✓ Home accidents are responsible for more fatal injuries than any other cause, second to motor vehicle accidents
✓ More than 18,000 Americans die from injuries that occur in the home and 13 million injuries occur every year
✓ More than 3.4 million children experience an unintentional household injury every year and 2,300 children under 15 will die from these
✓ Children under age 5 and adults over 65 are most likely to have an injury at home
✓ The living room is the most dangerous room in the house, not the kitchen as most would think
Most Common Household Injuries

1. Falls
2. Poisoning
3. Burns

Source: National Safety Council
Falls

- Falls are the 2\textsuperscript{nd} leading cause of accidental or unintentional deaths worldwide, resulting in an estimated 424,000 deaths
- Over 37 million falls are severe enough to require medical attention worldwide
- Falls are more common in older adults (\(>65\) y/o) due to weakness, medications, cluttered living spaces, impaired vision and lighting or young children under age 5
- 1 in 3 older adults fall each year
- Unintentional falls are the number one cause of non-fatal injury for children
Falls can be prevented! Take some simple steps to avoid falling or help others avoid falling!

- Make your home safer; remove trip hazards, add grab bars and additional safety items in the bathroom, use railings on both sides of the stairs, use safety gates and have adequate lighting in the home.
- Talk to your healthcare provider to evaluate your fall risk, review your medications to see if they cause dizziness or drowsiness and help identify health problems that could lead to falling.
- Try to do exercises that improve strength, flexibility, coordination and balance, Tai Chi is a great example.
- Make sure to have your eyes checked yearly and update your prescription if necessary.
- Wear sensible, properly fitted shoes with sturdy, non-skid soles.
Poisoning

- Poison is any substance, including medications, that is harmful to your body if too much is ingested, inhaled, injected or absorbed through the skin, according to the CDC.
- Over 90% of all poisonings occur at home.
- Unintentional poisoning occurs when an individual takes or is given too much of a substance, without intended harm.
- Poisoning can occur from many different items in the home, including cleaners and chemical products and also medications.
- This often occurs when a curious child ingests something they shouldn’t or medication dosage errors for children and adults.
- The most common poisoning is from prescription drugs- particularly opioid pain medication.
Every year thousands of children are accidentally harmed or even die from taking medications that were not meant for them.

Small children may be tempted by colorful pills and think they are candy while on the other hand some teens/young adults may take/use medications and even share with their friends.

Those taking opioids can quickly develop dependence and tolerance to them, requiring them to take more to get the same effect.

**Precautions**

- Get rid of painkillers and other unused medications properly- look for a take back program or safe disposal site.
- Store medications safely, out of reach of kids and visitors and only available to those they are prescribed to.
- Talk to your children about risks and complications of taking medications not meant for them.
- Don’t mix medications, check on interactions and only take as prescribed.
Everyday products we use in the home can be dangerous if not handled, used and/or stored properly.

- **Lock them up and away**: Keep chemicals, medications and any other toxic products in original packaging and out of the reach of children. Secure lids and put items away as soon as you are done with them.
- **Know the number**: Keep the poison control number posted for quick reference and also program in your cell phone. They can be reached 24/7, seven days a week. Call only if victim is awake and alert. *In the US call 1-800-222-1222*
- **Read labels**: Follow all label direction/instructions and read all warnings when using products and dispensing medications.
- **Don’t keep it if you don’t need it**: Safely dispose of unused, expired or unneeded medications or products in the home.
- **Do not mix household products**: Mixing certain products can result in toxic gases.
- **Protect yourself**: Wear gloves and protective clothing when handling chemicals and toxic substances.
- **Be sure to have good ventilation**: Open windows and use fans when using cleaners and chemicals.
- **Call 911**: Get help immediately if you have a poison emergency and the victim is having difficulty breathing or becomes unconscious, do not waste time calling poison control.
Fires and Burns

• Fires can be caused by things like candles, electrical malfunctions, smoking, cooking and heating equipment and can rage out of control very quickly.
• Burns can range from minor to severe depending on the depth of the burn and amount of the body affected.

Prevention:
✓ Be sure that you have working smoke alarms on every level of the home and test the batteries monthly.
✓ Keep fire extinguishers nearby and know how to use them.
✓ Plan and practice an escape plan in case of a fire, know two ways out of each room.
✓ If your clothes catch fire, remember to STOP, DROP and ROLL!
✓ If a door handle is hot, do not open the door but try and find another way out.
✓ Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
✓ Keep children away from anything that can get hot: stoves, grills, heaters and candles.
Choking occurs when a person’s airway is blocked and air is not able to move in and out.

The biggest choking hazards are small toys and hard foods.

Button batteries can not only cause choking, but can also cause serious and even life-threatening injuries, quickly.

**Prevention**

- Inspect your home regularly for choking hazards, especially when small children are present.
- Cut food in small pieces and remember to chew slowly.
- Adults should not drink alcohol excessively, which can increase one’s risk for choking.
- Learn CPR and the Heimlich maneuver.
Suffocation/Strangulation

- Most commonly occurs in infants, due to lack of muscle strength to lift their heads or becoming wedged against an object, or in small children who become trapped inside something or an object is placed on their heads.
- Simple preventive measures can reduce the risk.
  - Place infants on their backs
  - Keep plastic bags, packaging, saran wrap, garment bags, etc. out of the reach of children
  - Teach children to never place items over their heads/mouths or to wrap items around their necks
  - Teach children the dangers of climbing inside enclosed areas where they could become entrapped, like a car trunk or freezer
  - Be aware of cords, equipment, swings, clothing, ropes, jewelry or leashes or other items that could potentially cause strangulation
  - Window/blind cords should be avoided or cut when possible, or tied high out of reach and keep furniture away from these areas to avoid climbing and becoming entangled
Additional hazards may be found in or around homes that can be very harmful and even deadly to the occupants.

Certified home inspectors should be able to identify these problems and help you find the correct ways to remediate the issues.

Asbestos, carbon monoxide, lead and radon are all harmful substances that can be found in homes that can cause illness/injury or exacerbate health problems with long term, chronic exposure.

Although government agencies have standards to regulate the air quality outside, it is the homeowner’s responsibility to address the indoor air quality.
Asbestos: A fiber that was used for insulating and fireproofing in the 1940-1970s. Asbestos can still be found in older homes and buildings.

- It only becomes dangerous when it crumbles and is breathed into the lungs, causing respiratory issues and even a rare form of lung cancer.
- It is important to stay clear of exposed or crumbling materials that may contain asbestos.
- If asbestos is found to be present, it is important that you contact a certified technician to remove/contain it safely.
Carbon Monoxide: A toxic colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that comes from heating sources or appliances that burn oil, gas, wood, propane or kerosene.

- Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause headache, nausea, drowsiness (flu-like symptoms) and can lead to memory loss, brain damage, personality changes and even death.
- Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed on every level of the home, especially near sleeping areas and can identify unsafe levels and alert you to move to fresh air.
- Avoid leaving a car running in the garage, even if garage doors are open and do not use generators, stoves or grills indoors.
- Have dryers, ovens, heaters and fireplaces checked and services regularly.
Lead: Lead is a metal that occurs naturally in the earth. It was used in paint and can be found in paint chips and dust from the old paint in homes and on painted objects. Lead can also be found in hobby materials that use lead, some dishes (made in other countries), the soil and tap water from lead pipes.

- Children are most vulnerable to lead poisoning from breathing the vapors or lead dust or ingesting soil or paint chips, due to their small body size.
- There is no safe level of lead and even small amounts can cause serious health problems including mental and physical development issues, anemia, kidney and brain damage and even death.
- Most physicians will recommend your child be tested for lead levels during routine well exams and can identify your child’s risk factors for lead exposure.
Radon: Another odorless, tasteless, colorless gas that occurs naturally in the environment. It is found in soil and well water and can enter the home in these ways. Radon breaks down into radioactive gas that can be harmful when inhaled, causing lung damage.

- The only way to know if the home has radon is to use a radon detection kit that are available for purchase.
- If your home is determined to have high levels of radon,
- It is important to contact your local government agency to see what steps you should take to reduce the radon level.
Drowning

- In 2013, over 3300 people of all age groups drowned according to the National Safety Council.
- Most child drowning and near-drowning occurs in pools or bathtubs.
- Water safety should be practiced by adults and children:
  - Do not leave children unattended near any water.
  - Do not swim alone.
  - Use proper life preservers.
  - Learn how to swim and get children swim lessons.
  - Safeguard and take proper precautions with hot tubs and pools.
  - Only swim in safe, designated areas.
  - Learn CPR and first aid and have emergency numbers close.
Although one’s home tends to be their “safe place”, there are many hazards that can be present.

It important to take the proper steps to maintain a safe home environment, with extra considerations especially when there children are in the home.

A few additional hazards you may not think about….

- Sharp objects can cause serious injuries; store them out of reach, clean and care for them with caution (For example, place knives point down in the dishwasher)
- Use straps or anchors to secure furniture and heavy items to prevent tipping over
- Keep guns out of reach and locked, be sure to handle them with caution
- Be safe with electricity: keep items away from water, inspect wiring and appliances for any damage, call a professional to make repairs
- Consider using home security systems that not only protect from intruders but help with other home monitoring as well
“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”

- It is important that you take as many steps to prevent accidents and injuries in your home as possible.
- There are many checklists, worksheets and even virtual tours that you can find online that will help walk you through your home and help point out any dangers.
- Although you can do your best to prevent home accidents, unexpected problems can still arise and it is important to be prepared in the event of an emergency situation.
- Do you have the tools and skills needed in an emergency? Do you have a plan in place? Are you informed?
Key tips for being prepared in an emergency situation:

- Learn basic first aid and CPR, or have someone in the household designated
- Keep emergency numbers and contacts close at hand, know who to notify
- Have a plan for how to prepare for and respond to any emergencies, including an escape plan, include all members of the household…then practice your plan often!
- Know where the main shut offs are for water, gas and electricity and how to shut them off in an emergency setting.
- Create an emergency kit that you can use and/or take with you; it should include basic first aid supplies, copies of important documents or papers, food/water, extra money, family and emergency contact information.
- Try to remain calm and not panic, be sure to keep yourself safe when assisting others.
## Resources

- National Safety Council
- Mayo Clinic
- National Institute of Fire and Safety Training
- American Red Cross
- Safe Kids Worldwide
- A Secure Life
- CDC
- [www.homeminders.com](http://www.homeminders.com)
- WHO
- United States Consumer Product Safety Commission