

LIVING ROOM HAZARDS

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When you are baby proofing a room the best place to start is from your child's perspective. You need to look at the world from his point of view literally, and you will begin to see what he sees. Let's face it, you spend an awful lot of time with him on the floor, so it's really easy to take a look around at his level and start finding little temptations that can turn into big trouble.

You probably spend most of your time in the living room or family room. One moment it's your TV or relaxation area and the next, it's filled with toys and is being taken over by someone 20-25 inches long and 15-20 pounds. One thing you can be sure of, if there's trouble, your child may find it. You need to be one step ahead of him and baby-proof before temptation strikes. Here are some hints to help you make your living room safer. Remember, before you start, get down on your hands and knees for a better view.

LITTLE HAZARDS THAT CAN TURN INTO BIG PROBLEMS

First of all, don't leave anything on the floor that you don't want him to put in his mouth. He will look for and find anything new and interesting and instinctively, he will put it directly into his mouth.

Be wary of houseplants! Those leaves can make it from the plant into his mouth in just a few quick seconds. He will want to grab it, play with it, and of course - taste it. Take all plants away from the play area and remove any poisonous plants from your home completely.

Never dispose of razor blades and other dangerous items in wastebaskets your child can reach. Now that he is crawling he may look in the wastebasket, stick his hand in or tip it over. Even paper can be hazardous if your little one gets it into his mouth. If possible put the wastebasket in a cabinet with a safety lock.

Tablecloths may seem harmless, but they can lead to a world of trouble. The problem is not necessarily the tablecloths themselves, but the items you keep on top of the tablecloth. Heavy vases, cups of hot coffee or sharp knives could fall on top of your child if she pulls on the tablecloth and these items are on the table.

Keep your little one away from all fire hazards such as fireplaces and candles. Also remember to keep matches and lighters out of reach.

FURNITURE HAZARDS

Once she begins standing she will try to pull herself up on anything and everything. Stabilize all furniture including furniture with wheels. Heavy furniture such as bookcases, dressers and armoires may look sturdy and secure, but looks can be deceptive. Use anti-tip devices such as tip-resistant latches or furniture straps to secure furniture to the wall. If a child decides to climb up onto a bookcase to reach a book, it can quickly topple on to them and injuries to your child can be severe.

Cover all sharp edges. Use furniture corner cushions and table edge bumpers to cover the edges of coffee tables and furniture with sharp corners. Your child may hit her head, poke her eye, or get scratched and bruised. Those table bumpers should

remain, even if you have a toddler who is a strong walker. As you know, it only takes a split second to go from standing or running to falling, and those sharp edges can become even more hazardous.

I know you think if you put everything away in the cabinet, your child won't find it; but as soon as she can crawl, she may try to open every door and drawer; especially, if she sees the toys hidden in these cabinets. Install cabinet locks and drawer latches to keep curious fingers out of these areas.

Be sure to keep stationary activity centers, swings, playards and travel beds away from hazards such as window cords, draperies and lamps.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Cover all electrical outlets with outlet covers. There are many types of outlet covers. You may want to consider the using covers that swing closed automatically. You don't need to remove these to vacuum or plug in a lamp and then worry about resetting them. This way you won't lose the outlet covers or risk having your child put them in his mouth.

Extension cords can be hazardous as well. If he gets the end of the extension cord anywhere near his mouth, he can get quite a burn. It's like giving your child a giant electrical rope to play with. If you have appliances plugged into a power strip, be sure to use a power strip cover and keep it well out of your child's reach.

Children may pull on hanging cords or wires such as lamp cords and irons. Even if the iron is cold, your child risks injury because they are heavy. When a heavy object does fall, it may fall on a child's head or face. Keep all cords and wires out of their reach!

If you have radiators or baseboard heaters in your home, keep your little one at a distance to avoid a potential burn or injury.

WINDOW HAZARDS

Even if you are on the first floor, you should install window guards if there is the slightest chance your child could get access to the window. Even a short fall can be dangerous. Be sure to read the installation instructions carefully and make sure your window guard is secure and can't dislodge when a child pushes on it. Also be aware that screens aren't intended to prevent falls.

Window cords can be strangulation hazards. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, window treatments with cords purchased before 2001 and any window coverings you are unsure about, should be replaced or repaired. If you have cords that attach at the bottom and form a loop, you need to cut the cords, making two separate pieces. Not all cords can be cut, in this case you need either to replace the window coverings or purchase a tie-down device or cord shortener to ensure the window cord isn't within your child's reach.

Draperies and curtains are also a strangulation hazard. You can consider tying your draperies back so they are out of your child's reach. At some point, your child will be able to reach your draperies. Be sure to keep your child away from draperies. If they pull, they can pull the curtain rod down along with the draperies. It's a good

idea to keep these areas off limits altogether as you want to teach your children to play away from the windows.

GATES

If you have stairs, be sure to use a gate at the top AND bottom of the stairs.. Be sure the gate has a pressure bar or fastening system that will resist pressure when your child pushes on it. Be sure your gate is secure. If you leave him behind the gate, he may try to follow you and at times he will do everything he can to knock it down or get over it.

IMPORTANT RULE: Gates at the top of stairs must be designed for use at the top of stairs and be properly installed. Never put a pressure gate at the top of a staircase. If your child does manage to loosen the gate, he may come toppling down the stairs along with the gate.

Make sure when purchasing a gate that it meets current ASTM safety standards or is JPMA certified. Never use an older gate unless you know that it meets current standards.

SUPERVISE, SUPERVISE, SUPERVISE!

The living room is a place most families congregate every day and for parties and holidays. If you have a party in your house or if it's holiday time, you need to be on the look out for bags, bows, balloons, strings and wrapping. Always keep the room free from hazards and continually check your child's play areas for hazardous items.

Your child is a little explorer. The world is a whole new place for him. If you leave the door open, he will probably follow...if you leave a gate slightly ajar, he may crawl through. Basically, the moment you turn your back, he will try to explore everything and anything.

No matter how much you baby proof, there is one thing that your child will always need...your watchful eyes! You need to constantly supervise your child and be on the lookout for hazards. These precautions will help delight in the discoveries your children will make during their safe explorations.

DISCLAIMER

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