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News Trends Advice

SAFETY ALERT

Two childproofing devices Not Acceptable

Childproofing a home could prevent many of the household accidents that injure or kill about 2.5 million children in the U.S. each year. But our tests of 29 childproofing products in a lab and at home, with the help of child-development experts, show that some devices work better than others.

We found two electrical-outlet devices Not Acceptable. Both are designed to prevent kids from sticking objects such as paper clips into an outlet. One of the devices failed by fitting inside a test cylinder meant to measure whether an object can get caught in a child's throat. The other fails to seal off the outlet completely and therefore could allow an electric shock.

What follows are descriptions of the Not Acceptable products and a list of recommended outlet covers, straps to prevent furniture from tipping by securing it to a wall, cabinet and drawer locks, and toilet

locks. For results of past tests on safety gates and play yards, see our August 2004 issue. Whatever device you buy, don't let children watch you set it up: They may learn how to defeat it.

PRODUCTS TO AVOID

We judged some Safety 1st Outlet Plugs Not Acceptable because they pose a choking hazard to young children. Those plugs are semi-opaque (a clear version passed our tests) and are sold in packs of 12, 24, and 30. A 20-pack has been discontinued. They may also come in three Safety 1st kits: the Essentials Child-Proofing Kit, Family Room Child-Proofing Kit, and Kitchen Child-Proofing Kit.

The Safety 1st Swivel Outlet Cover is supposed to block an outlet completely, but a gap can let a paper clip or pin be inserted and reach the live terminal. The cover plate is plastic, but the screw used to mount it is metal and makes contact with the underlying outlet, providing a ground.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCTS

Electrical-outlet covers. Mounted on wall, over outlet: Mommy's Helper Safe-



BEWARE These devices were judged Not Acceptable. The one at left could choke young children; the other could allow an electric shock.

Plate Safety Outlet Cover, \$4 each; KidCo Decora Outlet Cover, \$5 each. Encloses or covers socket and cords, for center-screw outlets: Safety 1st Outlet Cover with Cord Shortener, \$4. Individual plug cover: Mommy's Helper Outlet Plugs Individual Outlet Caps, \$1 for 12.

Furniture straps. Parent Units Heavy Duty Topple Stop Furniture Fastening System, \$13 for two. If using with furniture made of particleboard, you might have to attach pieces of solid wood to the furniture before attaching the straps and screws, to better secure them.

Cabinet and drawer locks. Combination door/drawer lock: KidCo Swivel Cabinet & Drawer Lock, \$4.50 for four. For center-opening cabinet doors with knobs or loop handles: Safety 1st 00110 Cabinet Slide Lock, \$1.80. For sliding cabinet doors: KidCo Sliding Door Lock, \$4 for two.

Toilet locks. KidCo Toilet Seat Lock, \$15. A spring-loaded arm swings out over the closed toilet lid and locks it in place.

Free at ConsumerReports.org

For our full report on which childproofing devices work best, click on "Babies & kids" on the home page.