



1139 West Enclave Circle
Louisville, CO 80027-2902
Home (303) 666-4544
Work (303) 726-6828
Fax (303) 379-6909
Email info@ColoradoChildproofers.com
www.ColoradoChildproofers.com

TOP 10 OVERLOOKED CHILDPROOFING ISSUES

Childproofing your home should not be a difficult task. The problem stems doesn't stem from not wanting to do it, but from not knowing where to start and what to do. Accordingly to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission), about 2 and a half million children are injured and some killed each year by dangers right in their own home. That's why it's so important to carefully childproof your home.

You know that although childproofing is a necessary part of keeping your child's / children's home environment as safe as possible, the measures that the you take now and in the future is very important as to maintaining an adequate level of safety. Childproofing does not remove the need for **continuous** parental monitoring and control. Just stepping out of room can result in injuries or harm to your child. Always keep in mind that they can be faster than you think. **There IS NO substitute for continuous and adequate adult supervision of children.**

As professional childproofers, Colorado Childproofers takes each home project carefully. There is no set way of protecting every home. But from our experience and from data gleaned from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and Safe Kids, we list out our Top 10 most overlooked childproofing issues.

1. Falls – The number one cause of preventable injuries or deaths for children 4 and under is falls. Falls can happen from stairs, going through or over stair railings, falling after climbing up on the outside of a stair railing, or out windows. Some areas of concern:
 - ◆ Hardware Mounted Gates – For top of stairs, the CPSC states that you should only use hardware-mounted gates. This means that the gate is installed into the wall, balusters or posts using screws or other fasteners. We recognize that by doing this will alter your home, but the consequences are by far more dire. Pressure mounted gates are not to be used here as they can easily become dislodged by a determined toddler. Now you not only have the

- gate going down the stairs, but a child as well. Pressure mounted gates can be successfully used at the bottom of stairs or in doorways between rooms.
- ◆ Baluster spacing – Older homes are problematic in that the balustrades were set too far apart from one another. The US CPSC has established that all vertical rails cannot be more than 4” apart (the same goes for the bottom rail to the floor). You might think that even 5” or 6” would be difficult for a child to get their head through, but many kids will try to put their feet and torso through and then get their chest or neck caught in the railings. For homes that have ornamental railings like decorative wrought iron ones, these pose a unique problem in that the child can sometimes get a good toe-hold to be able climb to the top of the railing. To solve these two issues, we commonly put in plastic shields or panels and attach them to the vertical members.
 - ◆ Climbing on outside of rails – To address the problem of children climbing on the outside of the stair railings, we either suggest that the parent position a difficult to move, heavy piece of furniture in front of the bottom of the stairs, or we can put in an articulating-type of child gate around the back side of the stairs.
 - ◆ Windows - For windows, you need to be aware that no furniture, including cribs, beds or dressers should be near the window as children can easily climb on these to get access to the window. And don't think that the screen will be protective measure – far from it. To address these items, we will do things like put in stops or tethers to prevent the window from opening more than 4”, remove the operating handles from casement-type windows (keep them handy in the case of a fire), or putting in window guards.
 - ◆ Sharp Edges and Corners – There are number of these around your home. The best thing to do with these is to cover them with foam strips or by moving problematic furniture away from where the child may play.
 - ◆ Items near deck railings – It is very easy for a child to move a chair to try to climb over the top of rails.
2. Drowning – The next biggest preventable cause of injury or death in children 4 and under is drowning. For reference, studies done by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission have shown that almost 70% of swimming pool accidents occurred when **BOTH PARENTS WERE HOME AND WATCHING THE CHILD**, 10% occurred when responsible adults other than parents, and 20% of accidents in swimming pools occurred when the children were being watched by a sitter or a sibling. Of all the accidents that do occur around a pool with small children, 77% of those children had been seen within the previous five minutes!

Children can drown in as little as 1” of water. So it is important to be very vigilant when it comes to possible means of drowning. This includes:

- ◆ Installing toilet seat locks and eliminating any buckets (especially 5 gallon ones) to prevent toddlers from falling in.

- ◆ Never, ever leave a child unattended in a bathtub, even momentarily.
 - ◆ Ensure that there is a secured pool and hot tub cover in place. Our experience is such that every home we have ever gone in to do an assessment or to install childproofing goods we have never come across a properly locked hot tub cover.
 - ◆ Even having a pool cover is not enough, as children have been known to walk out on to these after a heavy rainstorm and drown due to the collected water ON TOP of the pool cover and drown. Further, just having a hot tub cover is not enough protection (Jack Nicklaus' grandson died in a hot tub accident by crawling under the cover). It is a rare time for us to find a locked hot tub cover. They are easy to pick up for a child to get under the cover, but nearly impossible for them to get out after they crawl under it. Install a safety fence around the pool and hot tub. These are typically 4 to 5 feet tall and have an automatically closing and locking door.
 - ◆ If you have a pool, make certain that all family members are trained in CPR appropriate for a toddler.
3. Kitchens & Baths – These are the two most dangerous rooms in a home. All sorts of problems can occur here. There are many objects that are attractive and fun for kids here. Knives, glass objects, big food items, hot surfaces, poisons. The list goes on and on.

The important point here is to keep your child from getting access to these items. You can do this by:

- ◆ Putting hazardous items in high cabinets, in latched cabinets or drawers, in a secure, locked room, or by getting rid of dangerous items you no longer need.
- ◆ Ensuring that no hot devices are close enough for a child to reach and pull them down. This includes pots and pans on a stove, toasters, coffee makers, slow cookers or other devices. Always use the back burners on your stove with the handles directed as far away as possible, and ensure that electrical cords cannot be easily reached and pulled down by a child.
- ◆ Don't be fooled into thinking that pots and pans are fun things for a child to play with. If they see one of these on the stove that they want (that just happens to have hot water or oil inside), they may pull the pot or pan on to them and get a very bad burn. Let them play with the plastic storage containers.
- ◆ Lock up your ovens, dishwashers, refrigerators, stove knobs, garbage disposals and the like. All of these devices are major threats to the child and are relatively easy to childproof.
- ◆ Make certain that the hot water in your home is set at 120° F or less. It is relatively easy for a child to change the shower control to be hotter and accidentally move it all the way to full hot. We commonly see homes where the water is above 140°, which can cause a 3rd degree burn in less than 5 seconds (we have even been in homes where the water was at 160°, which

will cause a 3rd degree burn in less than 1/2 second). Also, if you have an older home, you may want to consider having a plumber change your shower controller to a new, balanced type. These new units sense if the cold water pressure drops (in the circumstance where a toilet or other significant use of cold water is use), the hot water flow is automatically reduced. The same will occur for a drop in hot water pressure. If this is not a viable option, you can install an in-series antiscald bathtub spout and shower head that will shut off water flow if it senses that the water temperature is above 120°, although these devices are sometimes difficult to find. If you frequently run out of hot water, consider installing a larger capacity heater or better yet install an on-demand tankless water heating system.

4. Strangulation – There are a great deal of ways for children to get strangled. These include:

- ◆ Draw strings around the child's hood – These can get tangled in a slide. These have mostly gone away by a voluntary standard, but some are still out there.
- ◆ Window and curtain cords, especially ones that have a solid end tassel – It is easy for a child to put these around their neck and stumble. The best way to deal with these is to always ensure that the child cannot get access to these. Use cord cleats or wraps for these.
- ◆ Electrical cords – Shorten these as much as possible by using tie-wraps or Velcro straps around the excess length of cords, put the wires in flexible conduits, or hide them as much as possible. This is especially true for the back of stereo and televisions.
- ◆ Hanging items around the crib or playpen – Remove these from the vicinity when the child can start to stand as they are likely to grab for these.
- ◆ Tethered pacifiers – Be very careful of tethers that are too long for your child.

5. Electrocutation – Children are naturally attracted to items powered by electricity. Their inquisitive nature takes them to the outlet. Always ensure that outlets are properly protected. You can use:

- ◆ Outlet Plug Inserts – These are plastic devices that are plugged into the outlet (NOTE: Colorado Childproofers does not install these types of devices as children have been known to get these in their mouth on choke on these)
- ◆ Outlet Cord Box Covers – These devices actually go over the plug and retain the cord. There are even covers for power strips.
- ◆ Sliding Outlet Covers – These are the most fool proof of the electrical protection means. These cover the outlet until you push the cover over to expose the outlet. When a cord is disconnected, the cover automatically covers the outlet.

6. Choking – All sorts of hazards for choking exist for children. The bottom line is if it is small enough to fit inside a toilet paper roll tube, a child may choke on it. Other things to take into consideration:

- ◆ Pet food - It is common for many homes to leave pet food out all of the time. This is especially problematic for kids with larger dogs as their food is on the bigger side.
- ◆ Items around your yard – All sorts of items are problematic outside your home. Be very vigilant with what is around.
- ◆ Items left on your counters.
- ◆ Cat litter boxes – Need we say more?
- ◆ Door stops – Many of these have plastic tips that are easily removed by children. Change these to solid plastic ones or put in other types that are not hazards to children.

7. Door Safety – There have been many children that have injured or amputate fingers due to closing of a door. Some easy ways to prevent this are:

- ◆ Door Hinge Side Covers – These are flexible plastic sheets that are mounted with self-adhesive tape on the door frame and the door covering the hinge. These will keep children from getting their fingers caught when a door closes.
- ◆ Folding Door Locks – These are devices that go over the top of a folding door that prevents the door from opening. You can also remove these doors until the child is old enough to know how to operate these.
- ◆ Sliding Door Lock – These are devices that mount on the front of the door that also prevents these doors from opening. The same holds here in that you can remove these doors as well.
- ◆ Sliding & Pocket Door Bumpers – Install one at the top and bottom of the door frame to minimize the possibility of the child's hand from getting crushed by these doors.

8. Falling Furniture – A very common area that parents forget about protecting is furniture, especially ones that are prone to falling over if a child pulls a drawer out or climbs on a shelf. Some ways to address this include:

- ◆ Never putting anything that is attractive to a child on top of dressers or on higher shelves of a bookcase.
- ◆ Tethering furniture to a wall – This can be done using straps, brackets or screwing the furniture directly to a wall. Make certain that you are screwing into a strong part of the furniture and also into a wall stud.
- ◆ Removing heavy, sharp or fragile items from bookcases and dressers.
- ◆ Free standing ranges – These are prone to falling over if a child pulls the door down and stands on the door.

Copyright © 2005 Colorado Childproofers, LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of Colorado Childproofers, LLC. Personal use of the information contained herein at one's home is allowed.

9. Poisoning – All sorts of items around your home a poisoning hazards. Chemicals, cleaning solutions, medications, even spices. 1 to 2 teaspoons of salt can be dangerous, more can be lethal. Fluoride toothpastes are also dangerous. It you are ever in doubt with what may happen after a child ingests something, immediately call the Poison and Drug Control Center at 800-222-1222.
10. Childproofing Too Late or Inadequately – You should childproof your home as soon as your child starts to crawl, no later than when they start walking. At this point in time, the can move to an item that looks intriguing but is actually an injury waiting to happen. Get down to their level and see what they see. Don't forget to consider looking carefully at any place where the child may be left for a period of time, like at grandparents' home or at childcare locations. Grandparents homes are very problematic in that they have items that are easy for anyone to get into, especially medications.

This list should not be considered comprehensive. It is a starting point for what you should be considering to keeping your child as safe as possible. But as stated earlier, childproofing is not a substitute for constant and appropriate adult supervision. Lastly, childproofing goods can break or not work properly over time. As many of the devices that are used for childproofing are made out of plastic, it is important that all devices are periodically checked for viability and proper operation.