

WINDOWS ARE VITAL TO SURVIVAL, BUT KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

SOURCE: WWW.NSC.ORG/LEARN/SAFETYKNOWLEDGE/PAGES/POISONOUSHOUSEHOLDPRODUCTS.ASPX

There's no way to hear the story about guitarist Eric Clapton's 4-year-old son, Conor, without being overcome with shock and sadness. Conor fell 49 stories to his death in New York City in March 1991 after a maintenance worker opened a 6-by-4-foot window in the apartment where Conor was staying with his mother on vacation. According to the New York Times, Conor, unaware the window was open, ran across the room and fell through the opening. The window did not have a protective apparatus around it.

This tragedy is well known because it involved a public figure, but falls from windows are more common than people might think. According to the Safe Kids Worldwide 2015 Report to the Nation: Protecting Children in Your Home, about eight children under age 5 die each year from falling out a window, and more than 3,300 are injured seriously enough to go to the hospital.

NSC, along with window and door industry professionals and other safety advocates, formed the Window Safety Task Force in 1997 to educate caregivers about window safety. The Task Force offers these suggestions to help protect children: Remember, there is no substitute for adult supervision when it comes to window safety; keep an eye on children and keep their play safely away from windows.

- Keep windows closed and locked when children are present
- When opening windows for ventilation, make sure children can't reach them
- For a double-hung window on an upper floor of the home, open the top sash nearest the ceiling for ventilation while keeping the bottom sash closed
- Don't rely on insect screens to prevent a fall; they are not designed to withstand the weight of a person
- Keep furniture away from windows as they could tempt a curious child to climb and potentially fall
- Don't allow children to jump on beds or furniture, which could lead to a fall
- If there are young children in the home, install ASTM-approved limited-opening hardware, which only allows a window to open a few inches

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POISONS IN THE HOME: WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW

SOURCE: WWW.NSC.ORG/LEARN/SAFETYKNOWLEDGE/PAGES/ABOUTNATIONALWINDOWSAFETYWEEK

Most of us live with dangerous poisons lurking in kitchen cabinets, hallway closets, basements or garages. When warning labels are ignored or chemicals fall into the wrong hands, disaster can occur. More than 300 children are treated in the U.S. every day and two die as a result of poisoning according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC recommends keeping toxic products such as cleaning solutions in their original packaging, out of sight and out of reach of curious children. The Environmental Protection Agency defines a toxic substance as any chemical or mixture that may be harmful to the environment and to human health if inhaled, swallowed or absorbed through the skin.

Children are more vulnerable than adults to the adverse effects of chemical pollutants. Their bodies are developing rapidly and their hand-to-mouth activities make them more susceptible to toxic exposure, according to the Children's Environmental Health Network, which studies primarily toxins in household products, home furnishings and building materials.

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POISON IN THE HOME CONT.

Household Products

Experts recommend scrutinizing all household products including: laundry packets, floor and furniture polish, cosmetics, paints, markers, glue, drain and toilet cleaners, oven cleaners, wood and metal cleaners.

These products may contain chemicals such as ammonia, sulfuric and phosphoric acids, lye, chlorine, lead, formaldehyde and phenol.

Cleaners can burn skin, irritate eyes and cause respiratory harm, and formaldehyde, found in some air fresheners, is a highly toxic cancer-causing agent. Phenol, used to kill bacteria and fungi, is found in disinfectant and antiseptic products, mouthwashes and throat lozenges. Exposure to high amounts of phenol can cause burns, liver damage, irregular heart beat and death.

Laundry Packets Pose Significant Risk

Laundry detergent packets are attractive to infants and toddlers because they are soft and colorful and resemble candy, toys and teething products. Children who eat detergent packets are at elevated risk because of the concentrated levels of chemicals in the packets.

The American Association of Poison Control Centers reports children under the age of 5 ingested, inhaled or were exposed through skin or eye contact to single-load laundry packets 10,497 times in a 10-month period in 2015. Not all exposures were poisonings or overdoses, but more than one-third of all cases required medical attention. A study conducted by the American Cleaning Institute revealed 61% of parents are storing laundry packets within easy reach of children. Consumer Reports has called on manufacturers to develop child-safe packaging and prominent warning labels. ACI has devised tips for better living, including Doing Laundry – The Safe Way

Home Furnishings and Building Materials

Some carpets, textiles, foam furniture cushions, curtains, wall decorations and electronic devices are treated with toxic flame-retardant chemicals that can be hazardous.

A 2012 study by Duke University and University of California Berkeley revealed 41% of couches tested contained TDCPP, a cancer-causing flame retardant removed

from baby pajamas in the 1970s, and 17% contained pentaBDE, also banned in the U.S. Researchers noted that many of the flame retardants found in the sofas are associated with hormone disruption, neurological and reproductive damage, and cancer in hundreds of animal studies and a number of human studies.

The chemicals continuously move out of furniture foam into house dust, which can then be consumed by pets and people, especially small children who are near floors and put their hands in their mouths, the researchers said. Results of the study were published by Environmental Science & Technology.

When it comes to building materials, the Children's Environmental Health Network says to be wary of risks associated with items such as: particle board, insulation, asbestos, and, treated wood (used for decks and outdoor furniture).

The CEHN says some play sets and toys, as well as outdoor swing sets and playgrounds, may be treated with toxic chemicals, made from toxic plastics or include hazardous materials.

Indoors, the concentration of cancer-causing asbestos depends on several variables, including whether asbestos was used for insulation, or ceiling or floor tiles, and whether the asbestos-containing materials are in good condition or are deteriorated and easily crumbled, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

What Can You Do to Reduce Risk?

Make informed decisions about the type of products you bring into your home. Before you buy, read the label to make sure you know exactly what you're purchasing. Also, understand terms and definitions found on product labels:

- **"Caution"** indicates the lowest level of potential harm
- **"Warning"** indicates a higher level of potential harm, meaning you could become seriously ill or injured
- **"Danger"** indicates the highest level of potential harm: tissue damage to skin, blindness, death or damage to the mouth, throat or stomach if swallowed

NSC recommends periodically cleaning out storage cabinets and carefully following instructions indicated on product labels.

WINDOW SAFETY CONT.

Check Window Covering Cords

About one child per month dies from window cord strangulation, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Another will be treated following a near strangulation.

Parents and caregivers are urged to check their window coverings for exposed or dangling cords, and every year in October, the Window Covering Safety Council and CPSC sponsor National Window Covering Safety Month to remind caregivers of the risks.

Safety experts recommend only cordless window coverings or those with inaccessible cords be used in homes with young children. If you can't replace your window coverings with today's safer products, free retrofit kits are available through the Window Covering Safety Council.

Windows rank as one of the Top 5 Hidden Hazards in the Home, according to the CPSC.

Windows Save Lives

Since its inception, the Window Safety Task Force has distributed thousands of information kits with tips for preventing falls and using windows as emergency escape routes. These efforts seek to decrease residential fire deaths. According to most residential building codes, bedrooms and other sleeping areas must have a secondary means of escape in case of fire or smoke, and that exit is often a window. Just having windows designated for escape is not enough; they also must be safe and accessible.

- Test windows to make sure they open easily and are not sealed shut by paint, dirt or weathering
- If windows can't be opened quickly and easily, replace them
- Keep escape routes free from clutter to speed your escape and to help prevent potential falls
- Practice fire escape routes with everyone in the home
- Conduct daytime and nighttime drills (most fires occur at night) and assign someone to assist sound sleepers, young children or those with limited mobility
- Keep emergency escape ladders in second- or third-story bedrooms and teach everyone in the home how to use them
- Examine window hardware and make sure windows lock to help seal out air and moisture and help keep intruders out