

Make it home safe home

(AP) — Before you bring home your bundle of joy, take action to make your entire house secure, says Better Homes and Gardens Guide to Children's Products magazine. Know what products are safe for infants and toddlers and how and where to use them correctly.

One of the best steps you can take is to get down on your hands and knees and crawl through every room. From this level, you can track down choking hazards, sharp objects, electrical outlets and other potential problems within your child's grasp.

Look for small objects that your child might choke on. Run your hands through the carpets to see if your vacuum missed any small items. Tuck out of sight or shorten dangling cords from draperies, lamps and other electrical equipment. Move houseplants out of children's reach.

Block off the top and bottom of stairways to prevent a tumble.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission advises against using expandable accordion-type gates. Make sure the gate you choose anchors securely in place. If your gate features a pressure bar, position it away from your child so it's not used for climbing.

To deter falls from windows, install hardware that limits how far windows open. Also, don't position furniture so a child could use it to climb up to the window.

Cover all electrical outlets. Use child-resistant plugs or plates. Create a kid-friendly kitchen.

Put cleaning supplies, drain cleaners, pesticides and pet foods out of your child's sight and reach in a high, locked cabinet. Install child-resistant safety latches on all kitchen cabinets and drawers. Locate knives, kitchen shears and plastic wraps in a latched storage area where children can't see or reach them.

Check cabinet knobs and pulls to make sure they are too large for

a child to swallow. Cover stove and oven controls with sleeves that require an adult grip to operate. Protect pots and pans on burners with a stove guard.

Always keep pot handles turned toward the back of the stove. Whenever possible, use only back burners.

Stash small kitchen appliances out of sight. Use a locked countertop appliance garage, if possible. When using small appliances, make sure that cords don't dangle from the countertop. Likewise, the telephone cord shouldn't hang to the floor, where it could get wrapped around your child's neck.

Choose a highchair with a wide, stable base, sturdy belt and straps. Use them consistently and never leave your child unattended. Keep the highchair away from counters and tabletops, where baby might reach something or push the highchair over.



Safety check: Kitchens and baths rank as some of the more dangerous rooms for toddlers and young children.

A good wood finish begins with a good start

Before you pop the top off your can of stain, ask yourself this question: Am I completely done preparing the wood? Remember, no amount of finish work can

overcome poor preparation. Here are tips from Better Homes and Gardens magazine for getting a finer wood finish: ■ Wash the stripper by washing the wood away. If you used paint remover to strip an old finish off the veneered surfaces or

glued joints. Use paint thinner or rubbing alcohol on veneers instead. They are generally the best for cleanup from smooth out a banded strippers, as well. ■ Smooth over rough edges. The key to a professional-looking finish is careful sanding. Use a belt sander with coarse- to medium-grit sandpaper to smooth out a banded up wood surface. Sand slowly and carefully.

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