

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

BEYOND "STOP, DROP AND ROLL":

Practicing Fire Safety Habits at Home

As a parent, your child's safety is your first concern. A good first step to keeping your child safe is to follow recommended safety practices at home. As you follow safety practices, teach your child safety habits and show him what to do if there is a dangerous situation.



One of the greatest dangers for children in the home is fire. Every day there are fires in homes across this country. And every day, there are children who get hurt or die in home fires. In fact, children under the age of 5 account for almost half of all home fire victims. Children are the most vulnerable and likely to be hurt in a fire. That makes it extremely important to focus on fire safety with young children.

Many people still aren't aware of how dangerous fires are and how quickly they spread. They also may not know how to prevent fires and help reduce injuries if they occur.

Fire Facts and Safety Tips:

- ▶ **Get a smoke alarm and make sure it is working.** Most home fires in which children died were in homes that did not have a working smoke alarm.
- ▶ **Never assume you have time. It only takes a few seconds to a few minutes before flames can spread through an entire home.** Leave a burning home as quickly as possible.
- ▶ **The heat of a fire is more deadly than the flames.** The heat of a fire can rise to 600 degrees. The heat alone is deadly and can melt clothes to the skin. Don't think that if you don't see flames you are safe.
- ▶ **Once a flame starts, it quickly turns dark - into a thick, black smoke.** The dark smoke prevents you from seeing - and breathing.
- ▶ **Smoke and the toxic gases and fumes from fire are more deadly than the flames.** Breathing becomes difficult. This is a main reason why people are hurt in a fire.
- ▶ **Do not fight a fire.** If you cannot put out a contained fire - meaning it is very small and has not started to spread - with a fire extinguisher in less than 20 seconds, LEAVE.
- ▶ **Do not try to use a fire extinguisher for the first time when there is an actual fire.** Get instructions and practice using it beforehand. In a moment's notice, it won't be easy to just read the instructions and do it correctly.



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There's No Place Like Home

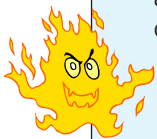
Home is a special place for children. It is a place of comfort, and an exciting place for children to explore and learn.

And it should be. But, it should also be a safe place. By taking precautions, you can make sure your home is as fire safe as possible.



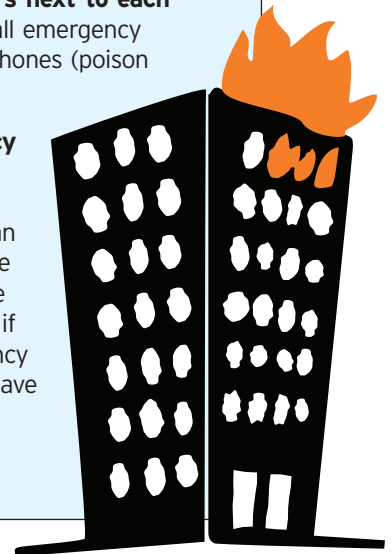
To Prevent Fires

- ▶ **Store all flammable and hazardous materials properly and out of reach of children.** This includes: kerosene, cleaning materials and household products, lighters, matches, candles, pesticides, alcohol, paint. If you have gasoline, paint thinner, ammonia, or kerosene, these should be stored outside of the home.
- ▶ **Keep matches, candles, and lighters out of reach of children.** Child-resistant lighters are not foolproof, children can still light them.
- ▶ **Use stove and cooking appliances safely or not at all when children are present.** Either remove all knobs from the stove, or use safety knobs. If you're using a pot, turn the handle toward the back of the stove or use it on the back burner.
- ▶ **Keep all electrical appliances and items with electrical cords out of reach of children.** Young children tend to reach and pull on items that they see. Make your home safer by removing any temptations.
- ▶ **Clean and empty all lint filters in dryers and have dryer vents inspected regularly.** Dryer lint build-up is a major cause of home fires.
- ▶ **Limit how much is on walls.** Artwork should not cover more than 10 percent of your wall area. Papers or flammable materials on walls or doors can make fires burn faster.



To Prepare for Emergency Evacuation

- ▶ **Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.**
 - ▶ Put UL-listed (Underwriters Laboratories) smoke alarms on each floor. Install the alarms high on the walls or ceilings, since this is where smoke rises. Keep them uncovered (no paint, stickers, or dust).
 - ▶ Test alarms monthly. Replace the batteries (in battery-operated detectors) once every six months.
- ▶ **Have a home fire extinguisher on each floor.**
 - ▶ Have a fire extinguisher located near the kitchen and on each floor.
 - ▶ Place it where it can be seen, but out of reach of small children.
 - ▶ Make sure you have an ABC-type extinguisher so that it can handle different types of fires. It should have a UL or FM testing seal on it.
 - ▶ Recharge extinguishers after every use.
- ▶ **Keep all exits clear and free of any clutter or blockages.** Toddlers and older children should be able to use exits in the event of a fire. This means hallways, steps, and pathways should be clear of debris, toys, or other materials that would stop or make it hard for children to leave quickly.
- ▶ **Post emergency numbers next to each working telephone.** Put all emergency related numbers by telephones (poison control, neighbors).
- ▶ **Have a family emergency escape plan.** Plan with your family for the event of an emergency. The plan will outline what everyone in the house will do if the smoke alarm goes off or if there is another emergency where you will need to leave the home.

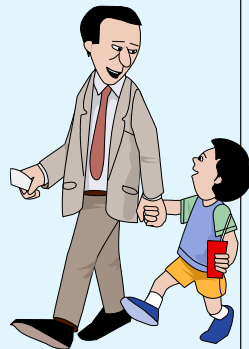


Fire Safety

- ▶ **Have regular fire drills.** Many families who have fire escape plans never practice them. Practice. It will help children remember and be able to respond better if the time comes.
- ▶ **Keep children's bedroom doors closed at night.** Closed doors can help prevent a fire from spreading and slow down the spread of smoke and fumes.
- ▶ **Keep a baby harness by the crib.** If you have an infant, a harness will allow you to carry your baby comfortably and leave your hands free to escape during an emergency.

Talk to Your Child About Fire Safety

Children learn by watching, listening, and doing. The fire safety habits you practice will help show your child how to be safe. Remember, children are very curious by nature. By removing fire sources and talking about fire safety, you can help your child understand how important it is to stay away from fire.

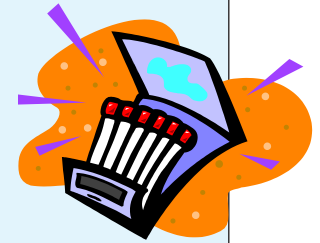


Many home fires are caused by matches, lighters and other heat sources. Children set a lot of these fires. Many children have a fascination with fire and actually hide and play with matches or lighters. Bedrooms and closets are often secret places where children will play with fire.

Here are some things you can do to help teach your child about the dangers of fire and what to do in case there is a fire. Of course, you will use your judgment depending on your child's age. But, children as young as 3 can be taught to practice safe behaviors:

- ▶ **Talk to your child about fire:** Tell your child fire is dangerous, and that it could hurt her.

- ▶ **Let your child know how a smoke alarm sounds:** Allow him to hear it when you are testing it so he knows the sound and what it means.
- ▶ **Tell your child not to play with matches or lighters they may find:** Tell your child to tell you if she finds matches or lighters, or to bring them to you.
- ▶ **Show your child how to crawl low in case of fire:** Practice how to crawl low on all fours if there is a fire with a lot of smoke. Do not crawl on your belly.
- ▶ **Teach the stop, drop and roll technique:** If your child is old enough, practice this technique to put out fires that may get on clothes.
- ▶ **Practice your fire escape plan:** At least monthly, practice your family escape plan. Make it routine so that it won't be as scary if it has to be followed.
- ▶ **Tell your child not to hide in case of fire or if they see fire fighters:** Many young children hide when they are scared. By practicing with your child, he will be less afraid. Tell your child to not hide, and if they see firefighters not to run away. (It may be a good idea to show your child what a firefighting uniform looks like).



Nothing is scarier than a fire in the home. Many fires are preventable. By practicing safety behaviors and removing or monitoring known fire dangers in a home, you can help reduce the chance of a fire. Make safety a regular part of your family's routine and keep your home the safe, comforting place it is always meant to be.





For More Information

- ▶ **Contact Your Local Fire Department.** Many local fire departments have information for parents and residents on fire prevention. Some may have free or low cost smoke alarms for community residents. Your local fire department will also be able to show you how to properly use a fire extinguisher.
- ▶ **FireSafety.Gov for Kids,** www.firesafety.gov/kids/parents-teachers, is a website on talking about fire safety and prevention with children, which gives lesson plans, and directions on how to draw up an escape plan, and provides information on fire safety recalls related to children's products, publications and educational resources. The Kids Page is targeted towards children in grades Pre-K through 3.
- ▶ **U.S. Fire Administration, Fire Safety Campaign for Babies and Toddlers,** www.usfaparents.gov, is a public awareness and education campaign designed to draw

attention to the increased risk of fire death for young children, and to teach parents and caregivers how they can avoid the tragedy.

- ▶ **FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration) for Kids: Resources for Parents and Teachers,** www.fema.gov/kids/teacher.htm. FEMA for kids teaches children how to be prepared for disasters and prevent disaster damage. On this website, children learn what causes disasters, play games, read stories and become a Disaster Action Kid. The section for parents and teachers has printable on curriculum and activities to do with children.

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