

Spring Forward with Safety

- Time to Change the Clocks



Daylight Saving

Time begins every year on the second Sunday in March. Clocks are set forward one hour, except in Hawaii and most of Arizona. This year, daylight saving time began on Sunday, March 10, 2019.

When you change your clocks, be sure to check the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Batteries in smoke detectors should be replaced yearly.

It's also a good time to review your family emergency plan, take unwanted or expired medicines to a prescription drop box and update your first aid kit.

Spring: A Great Time to Review Your Safety Checklist

- With spring comes a feeling of renewal. Families everywhere begin cleaning out their basements and garages. Windows are opened, flowers bloom and the days grow longer thanks in part to Daylight Saving Time, which this year began on March 10.

When you set your clocks forward, the National Safety Council reminds you also to review a safety checklist for your home.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms save lives – if they are powered by a fresh battery. You should test them every month to make sure they work and [replace the battery at least once a year](#), according to the National Fire Protection Association. If the alarm makes a "chirping" sound, replace it immediately.

Smoke alarms should be located in every bedroom and in the common areas on each floor of a home. Mount them at least 10 feet from the stove to reduce false alarms, less than 12 inches from the ceiling and away from windows, doors and ducts.

Did you know smoke alarms can be interconnected wirelessly? That means, when one sounds, they all sound. A [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) survey found this is the best way to notify everyone in a home if there is a fire. Be sure to purchase smoke alarms with the label of a reputable testing agency, like [Underwriters Laboratories \(UL\)](#).

[Three out of every five home fire deaths](#) resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms, according to NFPA.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Carbon monoxide(CO) is an invisible, odorless gas, and it can kill you. Anything in the home that burns fuel can potentially become a source of carbon monoxide. CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each bedroom and on every level of the home. The [safety tips for CO detectors](#) mirror those of smoke alarms: change the batteries, test them and interconnect them, if possible.

Also, make sure vents for your gas appliances (fireplace, dryer, stove and furnace) are free and clear of snow or debris.

Family Emergency Plan

The National Safety Council recommends every family have an emergency plan in place in the event of a natural disaster or other catastrophic event. Spring is a great time to review that plan with family members to make sure they know what to do.

Have a home and car emergency kit. The Federal Emergency Management Agency says an emergency kit should include one gallon per day of water for each person, at least a three-day supply of food, flashlight and batteries, first aid kit, filter mask, plastic sheeting and duct tape, and medicines. Visit the [FEMA website for a complete list](#).

The emergency plan also should include:

- A communications plan to outline how your family members will contact one another if they are not in the same place and where you should meet if it's safe to go outside

- A shelter-in-place plan if outside air is contaminated; FEMA recommends sealing windows, doors and air vents with plastic sheeting
- A getaway plan including various routes and destinations in different directions

What Else Should You Do This Spring?

NSC recommends you take unwanted or expired medicines to a prescription drop box or take-back event near you, update your first-aid kit and, most of all, get outside and have fun!

Getting the Urge to Clean?

With the warm weather comes a desire to shine and polish your home. But did you know that 90% of poisonings occur in the home? When warning labels are ignored or chemicals fall into the wrong hands, disaster can occur.

Poisons in the Home: What Every Mom and Dad Need to Know



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.

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
- Glass, 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 to Children



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
- 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.

Dirty Secret About Pesticides

Even though application of pesticides usually occurs outdoors, the National Safety Council says measureable levels of up to a dozen pesticides have been found [inside homes](#). Often, these pesticides are found in dust particles or tracked in from contaminated soil.

[Health effects linked to pesticide exposure](#) include memory loss, loss of coordination, reduced speed of response to stimuli, reduced visual ability and altered or uncontrollable mood or general behavior disruption, according to Toxipedia.

While some of the most dangerous pesticides have been pulled off the market in recent years, [including diazinon](#), others still could be tucked in the corner of your shed posing a risk.

Instead of using pesticides to control weeds and insects, the National Resources Defense Council recommends [safe ways to control pests in your home and manage weeds in your lawn](#):

- Wipe up spills immediately with soap and water
- Take out garbage daily and keeping garbage cans clean of food residue
- Mow your lawn more frequently
- Set your mower higher to keep weeds from elbowing their way in
- Try [organic, slow-release fertilizers](#)

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 disposal instructions indicated on product labels.

Living with chemicals is a reality. Understanding risk and limiting exposure are paramount to keeping your family safe.

Browse Poisoning Prevention

- [Lead](#)
- [Radon](#)
- [Carbon Monoxide](#)
- [Prescription Drugs](#)
- [Household Products](#)
- [Indoor Air Quality](#)

Window Safety

With warmer temperatures arriving, it's important to practice window safety - especially in homes with young children. Window Safety Week is the second full week in April.

Windows are Vital to Survival, but Keep Safety in Mind

- [Learn How Falls Can Be Prevented](#)

There's no way to hear the story about rock 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:

- Always supervise children and keep their play area away from windows
- Keep windows closed and locked when children are present
- If windows are open, make sure children can't reach them
- For a double-hung window on an upper floor, open the top sash for ventilation and keep the bottom sash closed
- Screens keep bugs out, but they do not keep children in
- 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 other furniture
- If there are young children in the home, install ASTM-approved limited-opening hardware, which only allows a window to open a few inches

Window Cords can Cause Strangulation

[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.