

The benefits of child-safe home improvements

All family members should be considered when home improvements are being planned, especially the youngest household residents who may not be responsible enough to avoid accidents and injuries.

According to a recent Vital Signs report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accidental injuries are a leading cause

of death among the country's youth — with one fatality occurring every hour from something entirely preventable. The CDC notes that the leading causes of child injury include suffocation, drowning, poisoning, fires, and falls. More can be done to keep children safe, and many strategies start at home.

Install security systems
A security system can be

just as effective at keeping little ones inside as it is at keeping unwanted guests outside. Alarms can be set to sound anytime a window or door is breached, which can deter curious children from trying to leave the house without permission. Pair the alarm system with secure locks and high latches that can also stop children in their tracks.

Remove fall hazards

Safety devices installed on windows that are above ground level can keep children safe. Stair rails should be secure and in good working order. Temporary gates can block kids from getting on stairways. Improve lighting around staircases to help children and adults avoid falls, and remove any obstacles.

Anchor heavy furniture

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission warns that unanchored televisions and top-heavy furniture can tip over onto children and cause severe injuries and even

death. Everyday furniture can be tempting to climb; therefore, using anchors to secure furniture to walls for security is a must.

Install locking cabinets

Locking cabinets can keep medications, household chemicals, home improvement paints and solvents, and other potential poisons out of reach.

Erect fencing around pools and yards

Install fencing around pools to keep children from wandering close to the water's edge. Towns and cities may require certain fence

heights or self-latching gates to keep little ones safe. Young children should never be left to their own devices around any source of water, whether it's a pool, tub or toilet.

Test and replace smoke alarms

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are only useful if they are functional. Homeowners should inspect such devices regularly to ensure proper operation and promptly replace old or faulty detectors to improve safety.

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Simple ways to avoid injury while gardening

During the winter, many people anxiously await the arrival of warm weather so they can get back outdoors. Gardening is one outdoor activity that attracts many a devotee.

Although gardening can be a worthwhile and enjoyable hobby for people of all ages, like other activities, gardening carries certain safety risks, even though few people may give much thought to the risk of getting hurt when gardening. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that gardeners suffer thousands of injuries every year. Many of these injuries involve lawn and garden equipment or accessories used while tending to plants. From lawn mowers to pruners to manual garden tools, gardeners may handle various pieces of equipment that can make them susceptible to injury if they're not careful.

To reduce their risk for injury, gardeners can follow these important safety precautions.

- Plant gardens in raised garden beds and containers to reduce the need to stoop down to tend to plants. Raised beds are easier on gardeners' backs and knees.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and durable pants to protect arms and legs from branches, thorns and insects.
- Remove tripping hazards, such as roots, lumber, rocks, and loose gravel, from the yard at the start of gardening season.
- Wear gloves to prevent blisters from forming and to protect hands from any chemical products used in the garden. Gloves also can keep hands clean, ensuring bacteria and fungi do not find their way into open cuts or scrapes.
- Vary activities and take periodic breaks so prolonged repetitive motions do not contribute to soreness or injury.
- Follow instructions for tools, and always use the right tool for the job.

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