

# Helping Your Child to Be Healthy & Safe

## PARENTING GUIDE



**Healthy<sup>®</sup>  
Lifestyle  
Choices**

*Helping kids make the most out of life*

[www.HLOnline.org](http://www.HLOnline.org)

We can't be with our children every moment of every day. Now, more than ever, the outside influences on children's lives are tremendous. From peer pressure to television, music, the Internet and social media, our children live in a dynamic information society that shapes their attitudes, knowledge and emotions.

It is easy to feel challenged as a parent, but the fact is you are still the most important and constant influence in your child's life. We believe this guide contains useful parenting tips to help children make positive, healthy choices.

## About Us

Healthy Lifestyle Choices (HLC) is a nonprofit organization working to give children the knowledge and skills they need to reduce risk behaviors, including violence, substance abuse, accidental injury, poor nutrition and lack of regular physical activity. The HLC Program includes a behavioral-health curriculum in grades Pre-K to 8, a curriculum for after-school and/or summer camp programs, webisodes and many other resources.

For more information about Healthy Lifestyle Choices, visit our website at [www.HLCOnline.org](http://www.HLCOnline.org) or call 504.299.1966.





# Safety

The number one health risk for children age 14 and under is unintentional injuries. It's called unintentional because there really is no such thing as an accident—90 percent of all injuries can be prevented with proper precautions and supervision. Examples include car accidents involving passengers or pedestrians, firearm injuries, fires, burns, suffocation, choking, drowning, poisoning and falls.

## What can **YOU** as a parent do to increase your child's safety?

It is every parent's responsibility to take precautions to ensure the safety of their children. Below are lists of other steps you can take to improve your child's safety.

### Car Safety



- Motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death among children in the United States. It is critical that **YOU** wear your seatbelt **EVERY TIME** you drive in the car. Children will follow your example. Statistics show that almost 40% of children riding unrestrained in a car were riding with an adult who did not wear their seatbelt.
- Make sure your child is properly restrained in the car. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that **ALL** children under the age of 13 ride in the backseat of the car. Here are other recommendations by age:
  - Birth - 12 months: Children under age 1 should ride in a rear-facing car seat secured in the back seat.
  - Ages 1 - 3 years: Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible by following the height and weight guidelines provided by your car seat's manufacturer. When your child outgrows a rear-facing car seat, they can travel in a forward-facing car seat with a harness.
  - Ages 4 - 7 years: Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they reach the height and weight restrictions allowed by the manufacturer. When they

outgrow the forward-facing car seat with harness, they can graduate to a booster seat.

- Ages 8 - 12: Keep your child in a booster seat until they are big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. This means the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie snug across the shoulder and chest and not across the neck or face.

**REMEMER...all children under age 13  
should sit in the back seat!**

## Bicycling



- Make sure your child has a protective helmet and that it is worn EVERY time they ride their bicycle.
- The bicycle should be in good condition, with adequate air in the tires and safety reflectors.
- Teach your child basic street safety. Review street sign and signal light meanings, and tell them to only cross the street at the corner or crosswalk by walking their bike across an intersection. (Note: Children under the age of 10 should never cross the street unsupervised.)
- Children should ride in the same direction as car traffic, not against it. If they are with a friend, they should ride single file, not side-by-side.
- Children should be seen. Dress them in bright clothing during the day. Do not let them ride after dark.

## Skates and Skateboards



- Ensure your child wears protective equipment, including wrist guards, elbow pads, knee pads and a helmet. For skateboarding, there are also padded jackets and padding for the hips.
- It is dangerous to skate in the street due to holes and rough spots. Instead, look for parks with skating trails.
- Make sure roller skates provide firm ankle support.
- Check skates periodically for wear to brakes and wheels.
- Discourage risky behavior—like stunts or skateboarding on ramps. Children should never hitch a ride from a car or bicycle.

## Playground Safety



- Most playground injuries result from falls. It is best to allow your child to play on a playground with a padded surface made with wood chip, mulch, sand or rubber.
- Make sure swings have soft seats, not metal or wood. Swings should also be far enough apart so children cannot collide into each other while swinging.
- Slides should be firmly anchored, have handrails and have traction on the steps. There should also be a bar across the top of the slide so children will have to sit to slide down.
- Check seesaws and merry-go-rounds to make sure that seesaws have a tire or other object underneath to keep the seat from hitting the ground.
- Children under age 4 should not play on climbing equipment. Older climbers should be supervised closely. Ensure handrails and steps are in good condition and make sure there is a guardrail around raised platforms.
- Remove hoods and drawstrings on clothing that could become caught at the top of the slides or in other playground equipment.

## Gun Safety



- Gun owners should always store firearms unloaded and locked up, with ammunition locked in a separate location, out of the reach of children.
- All parents should teach children never to touch a gun and to immediately tell an adult if they find a gun.

## Fire Safety



- Teach children to avoid matches, candles, lighters and lighter fluid. Keep these items out of their reach.
- Store gasoline or kerosene in a proper container away from the house in a locked area.
- Don't let papers, rubbish and oil rags collect—they can cause fire by spontaneous combustion.
- Keep children away from stoves, fireplaces or open space heaters, especially when wearing loose-fitting clothes.
- Inspect fireplaces and chimneys and keep them in good condition.

- Inspect and clean your heating system every year.
- Do not overload electrical circuits.
- Buy, maintain and keep a fire extinguisher in a handy location.
- Make a fire escape plan with your child so they know two ways to exit in case of an emergency.
- Purchase a smoke alarm and put one on each level of your home and in every sleeping area. Make sure to place it away from the cooking area, heating or air conditioning vents. Replace batteries in your smoke alarms once per year.
- If adults in the home smoke make sure they use heavy safety ashtrays and discard ashes and butts in metal containers or in the toilet.

## Water Safety



- Teach your child how to swim.
- Never allow children to swim alone. They must always be supervised.
- Have a U.S. Coast Guard approved life preserver, vest or flotation device for children who cannot swim. Inflatable toys or air mattresses are not life preservers.
- Do not allow children to run around water or push others into water.
- Do not dive or jump into a pool unless supervised.
- Never swim during storms or lightning.
- Adults supervising children while swimming should know Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- Always have a life-saving device handy, like a rope or personal flotation device.
- Do not use glass containers near a pool or at the beach.
- Pools should be enclosed with a fence or wall. Gates should have a latch above the reach of small children.

## Poisoning Prevention

### In the Bathroom/Bedroom

- Have a child-proof cabinet that locks. Even if your medicine cabinet is high up, children can climb and reach a cabinet from the toilet or sink.
- Keep medication lids closed tightly.



- Never take medication in front of your child or refer to pills as candy. Children may try to mimic you taking the medicine.
- Please tell visitors to put their medication out of a child's reach. Many people may travel with medicine in their purse or coat jacket and a curious child could find it.
- Hair spray, cologne, perfumes, nail polish remover and other astringents should be kept out of reach of children.
- Throughout the house, check windowsills, walls and older furniture for peeling paint that may contain lead.
- Some mouthwashes contain enough alcohol to poison a small child! Keep mouthwash out of reach of children.
- Some toilet bowl cleaners are very dangerous and can cause serious harm if swallowed.

### **In the Kitchen**

- Check under the sink for stored products that may be accessible to small children. This includes things such as bleach, rust removers, drain cleaners, oven cleaners, floor wax, etc. If you cannot remove the products, install a safety latch on the lower cupboards.
- Never store cleaning products and food together.
- Keep all chemicals in their original containers. You will need information from the labels on original containers in case of an emergency.
- Always keep cleaning fluids capped while in use and do not leave these chemicals unattended.

**Keep the number of your local poison control center, family doctor and emergency room near the telephone.**





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