



# PARENTING 101:

## Child proofing your home



MOST PARENTS ARE ALL TOO AWARE OF CHILD RISKS OUTSIDE THE HOME, BUT DID YOU KNOW SOME OF THE GREATEST THREATS LIE IN HIDDEN HOUSE HAZARDS? OUR EXPERTS HAVE DRAWN UP A CHILD-PROOFING CHECKLIST TO ENSURE ULTIMATE SAFETY AND PEACE OF MIND...

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**M**ine-sweep the room. Get a baby's-eye view of potential choking hazards by getting down on your hands and knees and crawling around the room, says child safety expert Debra Holtzman, author of *The Safe Baby: A Do-It-Yourself Guide To Home Safety And Healthy Living* ([thesafetyexpert.com](http://thesafetyexpert.com)). "Anything that can fit inside an empty toilet paper tube is a potential choking hazard," says Holtzman. This means coins, keys, jewellery, paper clips,

batteries, water bottle tops, safety pins, crayon pieces and batteries – so keep battery compartments taped up. Other biggies to watch out for are rubber/latex balloons and magnets. Holtzman explains: "More children have suffocated on deflated balloons and pieces of balloons than on any other type of toy. Keep latex balloons away from children under eight, and choose Mylar balloons (shiny, metallic) over latex. If a magnet falls out of a toy, it can be swallowed or inhaled."

**Don't Screw Up, Screw In**  
Safety gates are must-buys for any home with an adventurous toddler. These should be bought and ready to install before your child starts crawling, advises Holtzman. Babyshop ([babyshopstores.com](http://babyshopstores.com)) Mothercare ([mothercare.com](http://mothercare.com)) and Ace Hardware ([aceuae.com](http://aceuae.com)) all stock a range of safety gates, or contact Duma Safe ([dumasafe.com](http://dumasafe.com)) for custom-fit stair gates. "Install hardware-mounted safety gates for the top

and bottom of stairs," says Holtzman. "Pressure bar gates, which attach to the walls with pressure rather than with screws, are suitable for less hazardous locations such as for separating rooms on the same floor and in hallways. Never put a pressure gate at the top of stairs; such a gate can give way if a child leans on it." The just-about-to-crawl mark is also the time to get your screws out to secure larger household items to the wall (we're talking TVs, •





microwaves, fish tanks, bookcases, furniture and anything else that could potentially tip or fall). It's also worth installing finger guards on doors which can potentially slam on little fingers (finger strip guards, Dhs130, [dumasafe.com](http://dumasafe.com)). If in doubt, contact [info@dumasafe.com](mailto:info@dumasafe.com) for a consultancy, or visit [toolman.ae](http://toolman.ae) to book a baby-proofing home service.

### **Sleep Tight**

Cot death is a major worry for any new mum, so it's crucial to lay your baby to sleep on his/her back to prevent suffocation and reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. Fight the urge to over-pamper your little one with stuffed toys, pillows and blankets, as these are all suffocation risks, warns Dr Rallie McAllister, co-author of *The Mommy MD Guide To Your Baby's First Year* ([mommymdguides.com](http://mommymdguides.com)). "Also remove your baby's bib before placing her in the cot. The only things that should be in your baby's cot are the mattress pad, a tight-fitting cot sheet, and your baby," says Dr McAllister. "Keep the nursery warm, but not too warm: the ideal temperature is between 68 and 72F." She adds: "Choose the cot carefully. Cot bars should be no more than 2/8 or 3/8 of an inch apart to prevent your child from getting their head stuck between them. The cot mattress must

fit tightly so there are no gaps for your baby to fall into." Visit [ikea.com](http://ikea.com) for a full range of cots and fitted mattresses.

Once your child is able to push up onto her hands and knees, pay attention to the area around the cot, says Dr McAllister. "Keep the cot far away from window blind and curtain cords. Make sure that all furniture is far enough away from the cot that your baby can't use it to climb out, and never leave plastic bags or other suffocation hazards in your child's room."

**"Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, at least one on every floor of your home and outside of each bedroom"**



### **Chemical Savvy**

A tiny body needs just a small amount of a chemical substance for potentially fatal poisoning to occur so it's vital that all medicines, cleaning products and cosmetics are kept out of sight and out of reach of children. Dr McAllister says: "Move cleaning chemicals to high, locked cabinets. This includes dishwasher detergents, furniture polish, and pretty much anything you'd use to clean your home. All medications and vitamins should also be in high, locked cabinets. Even items you might

not think of as dangerous, but can be, such as eye drops and iron tablets." If you must store these items in lower cabinets and cupboards, keep them locked. Cabinet locks are available for just Dhs14 from Duma Safe, while Mothercare stock a range of easy-to-use cupboard catches.

### **Too Hot To Handle**

To protect your child from burns, be super vigilant when cooking. "Keep kitchen doors closed or at least install baby

gates to keep your child out," says Dr McAllister.

"When cooking, use the back burners of the stove and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. If your stove's knobs are on the front, within reach of your child, install knob covers (Dhs13, [dumasafe.com](http://dumasafe.com)). Also consider installing an oven lock (Dhs22, [dumasafe.com](http://dumasafe.com)) so your baby can't grab hold of the oven bar and pull the oven open."

Dr McAllister further advises: "Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, at least one on every floor of your home and outside of each bedroom, and test them monthly. Make sure

you replace the batteries at least once a year."

### **Away From The Deep End**

Most UAE homes have a backyard or rooftop pool, but this luxury comes with a huge responsibility. Dr McAllister warns: "Never take your eyes off children when they are in water. Often in large groups, everyone thinks someone else is watching them. Fence in the pool completely, and doors leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching - never prop doors or gates open." (Contact Pool Fence Dubai, [poolfence.eu.com](http://poolfence.eu.com)).

But it's not just your pool that you need to be wary of, warns Holtzman - "A small child can drown in just one inch of water (such as in buckets, bath tubs and toilets). Small children are top-heavy, and they don't have the upper body strength to lift themselves out of one of these dangerous situations." She suggests these precautions: "Immediately empty water from a bath, sink or container after it has been used. Install locks on the toilets (Dhs14, [dumasafe.com](http://dumasafe.com)), and store all buckets upside down. Lastly, set hot water heaters no higher than 120F. Water at 140F will produce a third-degree burn on a child in just three seconds." If you can't set your water temperature, install an anti-scald device on taps (visit [antiscald.com](http://antiscald.com)). ☹