

Home Safety: Taking Steps of Action

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The Home Safety Council just released the largest and most comprehensive study of injuries at home called the “State of Home Safety in America”. In America, preventable injuries in the home are:

- The 5th leading cause of death overall
- 2.5 times more likely to cause injury than car crashes and
- Cost our nation up to \$380 billion

Falls, poisonings, fires and burns, choking and drowning account for the most frequent cause of preventable home fatalities. The goal of the *Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department* is to encourage residents to take a few simple steps to make their homes safer and reduce their risk of injury.

A Harris poll surveyed U.S. adults to gauge the public’s level of awareness around the five leading causes of injury, determine what safety products they have in place and what safety actions they have taken to make their homes safer.

Falls: Almost half of respondents indicated having bright lighting at the top and bottom of stairs (48%), less than a quarter have handrails on both sides of the stairs (22%) or grab bars in the shower (24%). Fall prevention can be achieved by:

- Have grab bars in the tub and shower.
- Have bright lights over stairs and steps and on landings.
- Have handrails on both sides of the stairs and steps.
- Use a ladder for climbing instead of a stool or furniture.
- Use baby gates at the top and bottom of the stairs, if babies or toddlers live in or visit your home.

Poison Prevention: Only 18 % of U.S. adults have put safety locks on cabinets and only 18 % have posted the National Poison Control Toll Free Number (1-800-222-1222) near all household phones. Poison prevention can be achieved by:

- *Lock* poisons, cleaners, medications and all dangerous items in a place where children can’t reach them.
- Keep all cleaners in their original containers. Do not mix them together.
- Use products carefully. Read product labels and follow the directions. Use child resistant lids.
- Install a digital carbon monoxide alarm in a high traffic area within 10 feet of the bedrooms. Replace these devices every 5 years.

Fire Safety: When asked what fire safety products are installed within the home almost all indicated having a smoke alarm in the home, two-thirds reported having a fire extinguisher, one-quarter said they had a fire escape plan and very few indicated having a fire escape ladder or home fire sprinklers. Practice fire and burn safety by:

- Have working smoke alarms in all bedrooms, in the halls of bedrooms and on each level of the home. Install residential sprinklers in your new home or have them retrofitted into your existing home.
- Attend your stove when cooking, especially when you are frying food.
- Keep a space of three feet clearance around any item that gives off heat (furnace, water heater, stove, candles, space heaters, etc.).

- If you smoke, smoke outside. Use deep ashtrays and put water in them before you dispose of the remnants. Lock matches and lighters in a place where children can't reach them.
- Only light candles when an adult is in the room. Blow the candle out if you leave the room or go to sleep.

Choking Prevention: When asked, 39 % of U.S. adults indicated that they require children to be seated while eating. Prevent choking and suffocation by:

- Keep coins, latex balloons and hard round foods, such as peanuts and hard candy out of reach of children' reach.
- Things that can fit through a toilet paper tube can cause a young child to choke.
- Place children to be on their backs. Don't put pillows, comforters or toys in cribs.
- Clip the loops in window cords and place them up high where children can't get them.
- Insist your children sit down and take small bites when they eat.
- Take CPR and 1st Aid classes.

Water Safety: Of U.S. adults who indicated swimming in pools regularly, about half said they have these safety items present where they swim: four sided pool fencing, shepherd's hook or buoy, self-latching gates or had a 1st aid kit. Be smart around water:

- If a child is missing and there is a body of water nearby, look for the child there *FIRST*. Stay within an arm's length of children in and around water. This includes the bath tub, toilet, pools, bodies of large water, spas and even buckets of water.
- Make sure your children always swim with a grownup. No child or adult should swim alone.
- Put a fence all the way around your pool or spa.
- Empty large buckets and wading pools after using them. Keep them upside down when not in use.
- Keep your hot water at or below 120 degrees to prevent burns.

If you would like have your home checked out for these hazards and receive many more safety ideas, call the fire department for a **free and confidential Home Safety Survey @ 763-767-4003**. *We can help you take the safe steps to your home's safety.*