

When it comes to fire safety, information abounds. But as a busy mom, it's often hard to find the time to wade through the information and figure out what you need to do to keep your family safer.

Here are five simple things that you can do today to help protect your family from fire.



Do a Smoke Alarm Audit

Do an audit of your home's smoke alarms. (*If you don't have UL listed smoke alarms, make a plan to install them on each level of the home, especially near sleeping areas*). Check placement: Smoke rises, so smoke alarms should be located on a ceiling or high on a wall. Alarms mounted on the ceiling should be at least four inches away from the nearest wall and those mounted on walls should be four to twelve inches down from the ceiling. Test your alarms and be sure that they can be heard in bedrooms even when the doors are closed. If not, install smoke alarms in the bedrooms. Make sure that your kids know what the alarms sound like. Replace alarms that are older than 10 years and replace any alarm that has been painted over.

Parent Tip: Change the batteries whenever you change the clocks for Daylight Savings Time.



Make Extinguishers Handy

Be sure that you have at least one or more UL listed fire extinguishers in your home. An ABC-type extinguisher is a good all-purpose choice for fires in the home. Check the gauge located on the extinguisher to see if it needs to be replaced or recharged. Also be sure that the fire extinguisher is in an easily accessible location. Remember that fire extinguishers are not designed to fight large or spreading fires. Your number one priority is to have an escape plan and to get out safely. If the fire is small and contained and the room is not filled with smoke, get everyone out and call the fire department; then, you may use the fire extinguisher to control the fire.

Parent Tip: Read the directions and familiarize yourself with the use of your extinguisher now, before you're in the midst of an actual emergency.



Talk Prevention with Your Kids

Talk to your kids about how they can prevent fires. Children under age five are especially curious about fire and need to start learning about the tremendous danger. Take the mystery out of fire and make sure that your kids know the following safety tips:

- Never play with matches, lighters or candles.
- Never play with electrical cords and never put anything in a socket.
- Blankets or clothes should never be thrown on top of lamps.
- Don't turn up a heater without a grown-up's permission.
- If your clothes catch on fire, **stop, drop and roll.**

***Parent Tip:** Check under beds and in closets for burned matches or candles. Kids often choose “secret” places to play with matches and light fires. Even “good” kids are curious— teach your kids to always tell you when they find matches and lighters.*



Look at Your Home From Your Child's Perspective

Think about how your child sees potential fire hazards in your home by getting down on your hands and knees with them and taking a look around. See any dangling cords that could cause a problem if pulled? Enticing heaters or other appliances? Make adjustments to your home according to what you find.

***Parent Tip:** Make your floor-tour a game with your kids. Have them point out things they see by playing eye-spy. You'll be surprised by what catches their attention.*



Avoid Overloading Sockets and Cords

Do a walk-through of your home. If you see sockets with too many cords plugged in or even too many extension cords around the house, it may be time to have extra outlets installed by a professional. Always pay attention to the acceptable wattage for cords and lamps. Also look for extension cords that are “tacked up” or run under a rug as these could be a real fire hazard for kids and adults.

***Parent Tip:** The den and the nursery are particularly susceptible to overloaded outlets. Never plug something in unsafely “just this once” or “until I get another power strip tomorrow.”*

For more useful tips and information, visit the National Fire Protection Association at www.nfpa.org