



Home & Child Safety

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The ABC's of Finding a Good Daycare Center

This fall, millions of children throughout the country will begin their first away-from-home experience at a daycare center. It is a time that is both exciting and stressful, as parents try to ensure that their child's daycare center is as safe as their own home.

Whether a parent is sending their child to a daycare center or school for the first time, or the little one is beginning a new year at the same facility, experts recommend a thorough safety investigation. The type of steps below can help make the transition safe and easy for everyone.

Ask how the center cares for sick children

- How is medicine given?
- How are parents told about illness among the children?
- Is there a nurse or doctor to help with medical care?
- Are children required to have vaccinations before coming to daycare?
- Is a physical exam required before admission?

Check building and playground safety

- Are the windows of each classroom



fitted with safe window cords? Safe window coverings do not have looped pull cords that children can become entangled in, and are equipped with cord stops (visit www.windowcoverings.org for more information).

- Are young children able to get to high places?
- Are fire drills held at least every month?
- Are there smoke alarms throughout the building?
- Are safety gates used in areas for small children?
- Are electric outlets covered?
- Are sharp corners of furniture covered?

- Are the toys kept clean? Washable toys should be washed every day with a disinfectant cleaner, such as Lysol or a solution of water and bleach.

What to do to keep daycare safe for your child

- Visit with the staff at the daycare center. Go to meetings for family members and learn about the concerns of staff and other parents.
- Suggest educational programs for parents and staff members. Helpful topics include child development, first aid, dental care, skin cancer prevention, general safety and recognizing abuse.
- Help with cleaning and repairs at the daycare center. Many centers appreciate parents helping out as playground supervisors.
- Ask your child every day about what happened at daycare.

Approximately 70 percent of parents use some form of daycare for their children. While they cannot always be with their child, parents can leave their little ones in a safe, educational and nurturing environment. **HP**

October is National Window Covering Safety Month

A new season can mean a fresh beginning. As fall approaches, it's time to start thinking about window covering safety. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) have announced the fifth annual National Window Covering Safety Month. The national campaign, which will run through the month of October, is designed to increase awareness of window-cord safety among consumers and to urge parents with young children to replace or retrofit pre-2001 corded blinds, shades and draperies with today's safer products.

According to information compiled by the CPSC, since 1990 approximately 200 infants and young children have died from accidentally strangling in

window cords. Because millions of older corded window coverings still exist in homes, the CPSC, WCSC and retailers will be alerting parents to the potential dangers of window cords throughout the month.

Since 1995, WCSC has operated a national window cord safety information and education program. The Council also provides consumers with free retrofit tassels, tie-downs and cord stops for older window coverings. Free retrofit devices can be ordered through WCSC's Web site at www.windowcoverings.org, or its toll-free phone line at 1-800-506-4636.

WCSC is a coalition of major U.S. manufacturers, importers and retailers of window coverings that promotes window-cord safety and provides free retrofit kits to consumers.



"WCSC is urging parents and caregivers to replace outdated window coverings in their home with today's safer alternatives, such as cordless designs," says Peter Rush, executive director of the Window Covering Safety Council. "Each year, with the help of the CPSC, we continue to raise awareness of this important issue." **HP**

Happy — and Safe — Holidays

The fall and winter holidays are just around the corner. Families will reunite and make wonderful memories while trick-or-treating or enjoying festive meals. But the season can also pose potential safety hazards for young children. Luckily, most of these hazards can be easily avoided. Whether children are donning costumes, feasting on turkey, trimming the Christmas tree or lighting the Menorah, the Window Covering Safety Council recommends following these safety guidelines to help keep the holidays safe and fun for the whole family.

Halloween

- Help children pick out or make a costume that will be safe. Make sure it is fireproof and that the eye-holes are large enough for peripheral vision.
- Make sure that if your child is carrying a prop, such as a sword or pitchfork, the tips are smooth and flexible enough to avoid injury.
- Instead of carving, consider drawing a face on a pumpkin. That way, children of all ages can be involved without risk of injury.
- Teaching children basic everyday safety — such as not getting into cars with or talking to strangers, looking both ways before crossing streets and crossing when the lights tell you to — will make trick-or-treating a safer experience.

Thanksgiving

- Keep the kitchen off-limits to young children to lessen the possibility of kitchen mishaps. While cooking, keep pot handles inward to prevent them from lying over the edge of the stove. A fire extinguisher should always be kept in the kitchen.
- Keep Thanksgiving decorations away from any heat source such as an oven or fireplace.
- Make sure guest rooms are safe by testing all smoke detectors, covering all electrical outlets and moving all cribs, beds and furniture away from windows and window cords.
- If your guests include infants and young children, install cordless window coverings or retrofit window coverings manufactured before 2001 in all bedrooms and play areas. Free retrofit kits are available from the Window Covering Safety Council at www.windowcoverings.org or by calling 1-800-506-4636.

Christmas and Hanukkah

- Consider using an artificial tree, as they are cleaner and safer. If using a real tree, it should not lose its green needles when shaken.
- Secure the tree with wire to keep it from tipping and keep the tree away from sources of heat to prevent fire.
- Use only UL listed lights with no more than 3 strands linked together. It is helpful to use miniature lights,

which have cool burning bulbs, to prevent injury.

- Turn off Christmas lights while sleeping or when leaving the house for a long period of time.
- Use only outdoor lights outside your home and examine light strings each year. Make sure to throw away worn ones to prevent injury and fire.
- If you have guests visiting for the holidays, make sure to follow the same steps you would during the Thanksgiving season to ensure the safety of children and infants. These include: moving all cribs, beds and furniture away from windows and window cords and installing cordless window coverings or retrofitting window coverings manufactured before 2001 in all bedrooms and play areas. Avoid overloading wall outlets and extension cords.
- Unplug the light string before replacing a bulb. Review the original package to verify proper wattage and voltage.
- When using candles, place them a safe distance from combustibles and make sure that the candles have been extinguished before going to bed.
- Make sure to keep your menorah on a high surface, not too close to the edge, and out of the reach of small children.
- If using an electric menorah, keep children away from lit bulbs, electrical sockets and plugs. **HP**

Parents: Replace or Retrofit Outdated Window Coverings

In today's busy world, it is easy for parents to overlook potential hazards like the one that could be lurking in their window coverings. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 200 infants and young children have died from accidentally strangling in window cords since 1990. The Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) recommends that parents check all windows in the home and follow these cord-safety rules:

- Install cordless window coverings in children's bedrooms and play areas. Replace window blinds, corded shades and draperies manufactured before 2001 with today's safer products.
- Move all cribs, beds, furniture and toys away from windows

and window cords, preferably to another wall.

- Keep all window pull cords and inner lift cords out of the reach of children. Make sure that tasseled pull cords are short and continuous-loop cords are permanently anchored to the floor or wall. Make sure cord stops are properly installed and adjusted to limit movement of inner lift cords.
- Lock cords into position whenever horizontal blinds or shades are lowered, including when they come to rest on a windowsill.

With young children in the home, cord safety is an important factor when choosing window treatments. Although many of today's window fashions come with built-in cord-safe-

ty features that meet the latest safety standards, WCSC recommends the use of cordless products in children's bedrooms and play areas.

Almost every type of corded window fashion is now available in a cordless style. Horizontal blinds and mini-blinds, as well as pleated and cellular shades, are frequently transformed into cordless products through the use of spring-loaded mechanisms. Wand controls can eliminate cords on vertical blinds and traditionally non-corded rollershades and curtains are always options for consumers.

Those who wish to keep their older window coverings, however, can retrofit them with free kits available through the WCSC Web site, www.windowcoverings.org, or by calling 1-800-506-4636. See the diagram below for step-by-step instructions. **HP**



Keep Children Safe at all Ages



When it comes time to decorate a child's room, many parents mistakenly overlook the potential dangers that window cords can pose to older children. Some believe this potential danger only applies to newborns and infants. According to safety experts, however, once a child reaches the age of three or four, it is not uncommon for accidents to occur during active play. Parents need to be diligent in restricting children's access to window areas.

Curious toddlers may climb onto low-standing furniture or bookcases, either to peek out a window or to use the window cord as a Tarzan-type

swing. Some unknowingly spin in circles while holding onto a window cord, inadvertently winding the cord around themselves. Others pretend the cord is a necklace or cowboy lasso, which can tragically become a noose when the child jumps off the furniture or windowsill onto the floor.

Low-standing furniture placed near a window is of particular concern. Safety experts say toy chests, under-the-window couches and bookshelves, beanbag chairs, large cachepots for indoor plants and computer towers all can serve as "hidden stepstools" that a young child might use to reach a window or window cord. Parents are urged to move all low-standing furniture, cribs, and beds away from windows in any areas of the home where young children spend time.

Where infants are concerned, additional precautions are necessary. Cribs and windows are often the focus of decorating ideas for nurseries. Parents should be particular in selecting these products as they can pose hidden hazards to a baby's safety.

Crib and cradle slats should be no more than 2-3/8 inches apart, and the crib itself should be sturdy, in good repair and with a mattress that fits snugly. Avoid placing fluffy comforters or pillows in the crib, where these objects might accidentally smother a baby.

Always place the crib away from any windows in the room, prefer-

ably on another wall. Most reports of accidental window-cord strangulations involve window cords within reach of an infant's crib or playpen.

Both the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Window Covering Safety Council (WCSC) recommend that parents use cordless window coverings in children's bedrooms, as well as any room where a child regularly sleeps or plays.

New cordless window coverings and decorating solutions to match all budgets and decorating schemes make decorating for safety a breeze—from spring-loaded, no pull cord horizontal blinds and pleated shades to café curtains and roller shades. A simple cordless window covering in a neutral color, with a brightly patterned valance or topper to pick up the room's decorating scheme and color palette is a popular and practical solution to safely adding style to a nursery or toddler's room.

If you elect to use existing blinds, shades or draperies in the baby's room, make sure you check and retrofit for safety any corded window covering made before 2001. If you're not sure of the age of your blinds or drapes, check to make sure horizontal blinds and pleated shades are free from looped pull cords and are equipped with cord stops, and that the pull cords for draperies or vertical blinds are permanently attached to the floor or wall.

Free retrofit devices are available from the Window Covering Safety Council's Web site at www.windowcoverings.org, or by phoning their toll-free number at 1-800-506-4636. An illustrated guide to retrofitting older window coverings and a how-to-video can also be accessed on the Web site. **HP**