

Parents: Retrofit Your 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-safety 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 miniblinds, 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.