

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2023

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: KEEP FIRE SAFETY IN MIND



The U.S. Fire Administration estimates that 300 people die and \$280 million in property is destroyed each year as the result of children playing with fire. Parents and caregivers can take steps to prevent children from making the costly mistake of handling fire before a tragedy occurs. Talk to your children about fire safety, and keep dangerous items out of the reach of children.

The most common way children gain access to fire starters is through handheld lighters and matches. Keep matches, lighters, and other ignitable substances in a secured location out of your child's reach.

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Once a month, check whether smoke alarms are working properly by pushing the test button. Replace the batteries in alarms at least once a year.

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Only use lighters with child-resistant features.

Reduce the need for routine use of lighters and matches by buying flameless candles. These candles contain a lightbulb instead of a wick and take the danger out of your child accidentally knocking over a burning candle and being exposed to an open flame. Never leave an open flame, such as a candle, fireplace, stove, or heater, unattended by an adult.

In the winter months, consider holiday-specific fire concerns as well. Make sure that smoke alarms are working before decorating for the holidays. Turn off holiday lights before leaving the house or going to bed. If you buy an artificial tree for decorating, be sure it's labeled "fire-retardant." If you use a natural tree, keep it watered, as a dry tree can more easily catch fire. Keep all decorations away from all heat sources, such as electrical outlets, radiators, and portable space heaters. Don't overload indoor or outdoor electrical outlets. Check light strands and other decoration wires for fraying or damage.

Have your fireplace inspected before you light your first fire of the season. A chimney professional can clean your fireplace and ensure that it is safe to use. Use a sturdy fireplace screen when burning fires. Never burn paper or pine boughs because they can float out of the chimney and ignite a nearby home or your own roof.

Even if no one is at fault, house fires can still happen. Help your child survive a fire by installing smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms, and outside sleeping areas. Once a month, check whether each alarm in the home is working properly by pushing the test button. Replace the batteries in smoke alarms at least once a year. Immediately install a new battery if an alarm chirps, warning the battery is low. Teach your children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do when they hear one.

Have a family fire escape plan that everyone in the household knows. Teach your children two ways to escape from every room of your home, and where



to meet up outside. Practice your fire escape plan at least twice a year. Teach children to stay low to avoid smoke, test doors for heat before opening, and not to take anything with them when they evacuate. Emphasize "get out, stay out." Only professional firefighters should enter a building that is on fire — even if other family members, pets, or prized possessions are inside. Consider getting escape ladders for sleeping areas on the second or third floors. Learn how to use them and store them near the windows. Teach household members to STOP, DROP and ROLL if their clothes should catch on fire.

Preparation, education, and practice can help keep your family safe from fires.

REFERENCES:

- <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/fire/fire-safety-for-kids.html>
- <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/holiday-dangers.html>

ADULT
HEALTH BULLETIN

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