

Child Safety In The Home

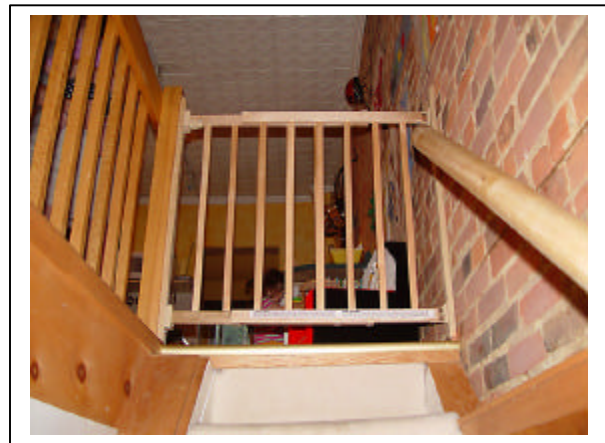
A Work In Progress

Children are getting injured in their homes. The Centres for Disease Control (CDC) cites that more than fifty percent of childhood injuries occur in and around the home. These injuries are the leading cause of death in children and youth. Two thirds of the injuries take place during play.

The high incidence of injury in the home is tragic because almost all these accidents are not only predictable but also are preventable. For the most part, injuries are not caused by deficiencies in the house itself but rather in the parents' inability to predict accidents. Parents are not always aware just how to make the home safer for children.

Predictable Accidents

It probably comes as no surprise that many injuries happen on the staircase. Most parents install baby gates to prevent children from falling down the stairs. But not all potential accidents are so clear-cut. For example, most of us quickly recognize a situation in which a child could fall and get hurt, but how about things falling *on* the child?



Children Get Crushed

Children can get crushed under television sets. TV sets tend to be front heavy. If the TV also sits atop a wobbly table, children face an even greater danger. Once a baby begins crawling and is anxious to stand up, she will try to pull herself into a standing position on any available surface. If the child pulls herself up on the wobbly table with the front-heavy TV on it, an accident is likely to happen, and one that could cause serious injury. Bookshelves, dressers and armoires fall into the category of "falling hazards" as well.



Toilet Tips for Parents

Here is another potential accident waiting to happen: toddlers drowning in toilets. Toddlers are top heavy. The curious toddler may reach into what he sees as a pond of water and topple into the toilet bowl head first. At this age, children lack the strength to pull themselves out.

Don't Be Blind to Window Blinds

Here is an example of a blind spot that could cause an accident: a child could get caught up in the draw strings of horizontal window blinds. When the window blind is up, there is an enormous amount of slack on the string. The string presents a strangulation hazard, particularly if the child's bed is next to the window.

These are only a sampling of the kinds of accidents that can take place in the home. Parents owe it to their children to educate themselves on all the dangers children might face in and around the home.

It's A Work In Progress

Child safety in the home is a work in progress. In our opinion, there is no such thing as comprehensively baby proofing a house. Many worthwhile measures can make the home safer, but the real key to safety is raising awareness. The examples above cite dangers that depend on the furniture and accessories new homeowners bring into the home, and where these items get placed. But dangers are also always relative to a child's age. As children grow older, the dangers shift and change. That's why parents need to stay aware.

Home Inspectors Hop on Board

Clarus Group, a technical writing company in Toronto, has developed a *Child Safety In The Home* disk that home inspectors are distributing to REALTORS® across Canada. Home inspectors are speaking at real estate offices on the topic, and giving a copy of the disk to each attendee for free. These home inspectors also give a copy to each of their clients with children. These disks contain a wealth of information about child safety in the home. Agents are invited to make copies to distribute them to their clients as well.

If you would like to find an inspector in your area that is distributing the disks, send an E-mail to charles@clarusgroup.com.

Awareness Is Key

We can't stress this enough: while hiring someone to conduct a one-time, baby-proofing audit is a great foundation for child safety in the home, it does not address the whole picture. Safety does not stop with safety gadgets, it depends on a general awareness, such as turning the handles of cooking pots away from the edge of the stove so that a child can't pull down boiling food onto him or herself.

Raising awareness is an important job we can all share. Here are some web sites you can look at to get you started in your home safety research.

- *National Safety Council*, www.nsc.org
- *CDC* (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention), <http://www.cdc.gov>
- *National Safe Kids Campaign*[®], www.safekids.org
- *Safe Kids Canada*, www.safekidscanada.ca
- *CHIRPP* (Canadian Hospital Injury Reporting and Prevention Program), <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/injury-bles/chirpp>
- *Baby and Child Safety*, www.babyandchildsafety.com
- *Safe USA*, coming soon <http://www.safeusa.org>
- *Clarus Group*, www.clarusgroup.com

Charles Gravely, P.Eng., M.Eng.
President, Clarus Group
Charles@clarusgroup.com

The author has worked in the building industry for over 16 years. Charles is now president of Clarus Group, a technical writing company specializing in the building industry.