

Protect Your Child from Dangerous Home Electrical Hazards

Bringing a baby home from the hospital is the perfect time to think about childproofing your house. Don't wait; before you know it, your child will be crawling around, exploring your home, investigating everything with insatiable curiosity. The sooner you move harmful household chemicals and other potential dangers out of the way, the better. Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death for children, claiming more lives even than disease, according to Safe Kids Worldwide, a global organization whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury.

When childproofing your home, don't forget about electricity. We take it for granted because it is so much a part of our daily lives, but it can be deadly when mishandled, even in small amounts. The electricity in one 7.5-watt Christmas tree light bulb, if passed through the chest, is enough to kill an adult in less than one second. That's why it's essential that you childproof your home against electrical shock, and educate your children to be aware of its dangers. The Leviton Institute recommends you take the following precautions to ensure the safety of your children:

- **Tamper-Proof Outlets:**

Install tamper-proof outlets. Designed to keep young fingers out of unused outlets, they feature an internal barrier that only allows insertion of a properly rated plug, while keeping out fingers and foreign objects.

- **Child-Resistant Wallplates:**

Add a child-resistant wallplate to unprotected outlets. These fit over a standard receptacle and protect unused outlets with a spring-loaded wallplate that is easy for adults to open, but difficult for children to access.

- **Outlets Caps:**

Insert plastic outlet caps into empty receptacles. A snap to install, they greatly reduce the risk of electrical shock by blocking toddlers' fingers from contact with unused outlets.

- **Switch Locks:**

Install switch locks. These fit over most standard wall switches, and use handy locking snaps to prevent children from turning lights or appliances on or off.

- **Extender Wallplates:**

Create access to switches kids need to reach, but can't, with extender wallplates, which fit over standard toggle switches.

- **Nightlights:**

Use a nightlight to provide a reassuring guide in the dark for your child. Perfect for the nursery, bathroom or bedroom, they come in a wide variety of kid-friendly styles. Some models offer a convenient automatic On/Off feature that turns on at dusk, off at dawn. Another practical design fits over both outlets of a standard duplex receptacle,

blocking the unused outlet from prying fingers while casting a warm glow at night. And they are economical, running on just pennies a day.

- **GFCIs:**

Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) in any room with a water source within six feet of an outlet, such as bathrooms, kitchens, etc. They protect you and your children against shock or electrocution by shutting off the power at the receptacle when they detect current leaking from the circuit to ground. Always be sure your children understand that water and electricity don't mix; appliances like radios and hairdryers should never be used near a sink or bath.

- **Light Bulbs:**

Make sure that every light socket within a child's reach has a bulb in it.

- **Extension Cords:**

Avoid using extension cords in a child's room whenever possible. Kids are liable to chew on them, particularly when nothing is plugged into them, or pull on them, knocking over a lamp or appliance.