



Play it safe with a child-friendly home

Cleaning products, garden sprays, fuels and even cosmetics can all be dangerous if they're not used or stored carefully. Small children are especially at risk from hazardous substances in everyday products. Find out how to protect children when using chemicals in and around your home.

Stay a step ahead

Watch young children closely to keep them safe. Check your home as your child develops and learns to walk, climb and problem-solve. Adults are often surprised to find how easily a small child can get access to cupboards they thought were out of reach.

Don't expect young children to understand that certain products are dangerous, even if you have explained this many times. Keep hazardous substances out of their sight, as well as out of their reach.

Remember that babies and young children often put things in their mouths. While this is a natural part of their development, it can be very dangerous if they touch or taste a hazardous substance.

Keep children safe in your home by following the advice in this information sheet prepared by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

In case of emergency...

Call the Poisons Centre for advice on 0800 764 766.

If a person is not breathing or is unconscious, phone 111 immediately.



Lock up tight and out of sight

All hazardous substances should be kept locked up or, preferably, in a cupboard that is well out of children's reach.

Store cleaning products, garden sprays, fuels, paints and other products that children shouldn't touch in a place that is:

- up high – at least the shoulder height of an average adult
- difficult for a child to open – use a lock or child-resistant fastening
- out of sight – hazardous substances are often in colourful packaging, so make sure children can't see them.

Lock safety in

Make sure you install child safety locks on all drawers and cupboard doors where hazardous substances are stored. Safety locks, sold at hardware and baby stores, are a quick and easy investment in your family's safety.

Before storing them, make sure the lids or packaging of all products are closed securely. Check that child-resistant lids are fully engaged.

Store things straight away

Children can move surprisingly quickly and get their hands on bottles or containers much faster than adults expect. Too often, children are poisoned while an adult is using the substance, or when someone has delayed putting it away.

You can protect children from harm by:

- putting away any hazardous substance as soon as you bring it home – this means that when you get home with a load of groceries, you put cleaning products and other chemicals in a safe place before dealing with chilled food and other items
- keeping hazardous substances up high while you're using them – for example, putting a cleaning spray bottle on a high shelf while you clean a room
- putting hazardous substances away as soon as you've finished using them.

If you're interrupted while using a hazardous substance or before you can put it away, keep the product with you. For example, if the phone rings while you are cleaning, take the products with you to answer the phone.

'Child-resistant' packaging is not child proof

Some products are in containers that have been designed to be hard for children to open, but many children can work out how to open them.

You should take the same care with products in child-resistant packaging as you would with other hazardous substances. They need to be stored in a locked or child-safe cupboard that is out of children's sight and reach.

Make sure you close child-resistant lids or packages properly every time, and double-check that they're properly closed before storing them.

Don't be tempted to leave any container partly open so that you can get into it more quickly when needed.

The EPA's role

The EPA helps safeguard people and the environment by assessing and approving hazardous substances for use in New Zealand.

This information is provided to help you keep yourself and your family safe when using hazardous substances in and around your home.

Further information

This information was developed with input from Plunket, SafeKids, the National Poisons Centre and the Child and Youth Mortality Committee.

The EPA has more information on its website to help people understand how to stay safe with hazardous substances at home:

www.epa.govt.nz/hazardous-substances