

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Home Safety : Guidance for Parents and Professionals (CFHD – G002)

## What is Home Safety?

Children are usually deeply curious – it's how they learn, grow and develop. They are often curious about the environments surrounding them and how things within them work. Occupational Therapists recognise that this exploration can be very nerve wracking for parents and caregivers; especially those with children with *additional* needs who often find it difficult to understand risk, danger and personal safety. For many reasons, these children might also struggle to remember rules, understand social norms and control their emotional and behavioural reactions.

Despite such challenges, Occupational Therapists encourage "*positive risk taking*". That is, weighing up the risks to your child within the home and *managing* those risks so that your child can access their home and activities within it, as much as possible. Although we understand that you might feel the need to stop your child from accessing some environments and activities all together, it is important that all children are supported to develop their understanding of risk and danger in a safely managed way.

Children's Occupational Therapists can provide your family with examples of well-established strategies which you can use at home to keep your child safer and - as far as is appropriate - promote, rather than restrict, their access to their home.

## **Risk Assessment**

We all naturally carry out “informal risk assessments” all the time, without even realising it - for example, crossing the road. A risk assessment involves spotting any hazards in an environment or during an activity and then applying some “controls” (strategies) to reduce the risks. So going back to our example of an adult wanting to cross the road, they would decide whether it is a safe place to cross or whether there is a safer dedicated place to cross and what the traffic on the road is like. Sometimes we can change our behaviours to increase our safety or we might need specific equipment to be safer. For example, wearing a fluorescent jacket when crossing busy roads at night. Considering home safety, we prefer to look at changing behaviours or making small environmental adjustments before making any drastic changes (like completely preventing a child from accessing a room).

## **Home Safety Strategies**

The level of intervention will always depend upon the comprehension / learning needs of the child.

### **Stage 1**




- Remain consistent and firm with the **behavioural approach** – rewarding desired behaviours with clear praise, sticker charts / healthy rewards (eg time at the park) and removing enjoyed items/treats for undesirable behaviours
- Setting very clear and consistent boundaries
- Explain the risks of undesirable, unsafe behaviours
- Social stories to teach risk and desirable behaviours (social norms)
- Educational videos – watch these *together* and discuss afterwards (eg <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org> & <http://www.do2learn.com/games/songs>).




The bottom line is, **be vigilant**. No environment is risk free, but risks can be reduced.

Even once you have ‘safety-proofed’ your home, children with additional needs often continue to need supervision when exploring their environments, to support their safe learning and development.

We do not recommend specific companies for safety proofing, but some well-established providers who provide inexpensive solutions that you may wish to research include:

Jackloc      Babydan      Smith & Locke      Magiplug SGN      Safetots

Hazard Area	Potential Risks	Strategies
<b>LIGHTS</b>	Pulling down light fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacing dangling lights with flush light fittings as much as possible</li> <li>• Ensuring use of energy saving bulbs which do not produce as much heat, to reduce risk of burns if doing this</li> </ul>
<b>ELECTRIC SOCKETS / CABLES</b>	Fingers in plug sockets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plug socket covers</li> <li>• Installation of a key operated socket</li> </ul>  <p><i>Plug socket cover – choose this</i></p>  <p><i>style</i> <b>NOT this style</b></p>  <p><i>Key operated socket</i></p>
	Chewing through cables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hide/cover cables with cable tubes</li> <li>• Provide safe alternatives ie chewables or 'chewlery' sensory toys</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>WINDOWS</b></p>	<p>Absconding via windows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep lockable windows locked in either the closed or cracked open position</li> <li>• Remove items from beneath windows that may be climbed on to access window</li> <li>• Window restrictors (depending upon the type of window you have, choose the appropriate restrictor) eg cable style, concealed key locking metal style, swivel/stud style, folding style.</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Cable style restrictor</i></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>concealed key locking style</i></p> </div> </div>
	<p>Smashing windows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most modern windows are fitted with shatter proof glass. If yours are not, consider safety film across the pane of glass to hold the broken glass together (<a href="http://www.windowfilm.co.uk">www.windowfilm.co.uk</a>)</li> <li>• Consider whether film needs to be anti-glare – filters out UV light; useful for those who are light sensitive</li> <li>• Same can be used across internal doors with glass panels.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>DOORS</b></p>	<p>Fingers trapped in door frame</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finger guards fitted on doorways; completely covering the area between door and hinge when the door is open</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
	<p>Falling against inside of door – carer unable to open from outside</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit 180° hinges; door can swing inwards and outwards <a href="http://www.ratman.co.uk">www.ratman.co.uk</a></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BLINDS</b></p>	<p>Injury from cords on blinds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace with cordless, spring loaded blinds if possible</li> <li>• Install and adjust cord stops to limit movement of inner cords on blinds and shades</li> <li>• Keep cords out of reach on a short setting</li> <li>• Move furniture and climbable surfaces away from windows.</li> </ul>

KITCHEN

**Children with limited danger awareness and history of unsafe behaviours within the kitchen should be closely supervised when spending time in this room**

Inappropriate use of electrical appliances

- Plug socket covers
- Installation of a key operated socket

Desire to boil the kettle and pour from this

- Close supervision
- If child has good upper limb strength and can pour safely from kettle with supervision, do not fill kettle with more water than needed for food/drink being prepared, to reduce overspill

Opening the washing machine when on / tampering with controls

- Most modern washing machines have an inbuilt automatic child lock when cycle is on
- If your machine does not have this feature, lock the child out of the kitchen when washing machine is on by either locking the door or installing a child safety gate of appropriate height to prevent climbing over
- Covering dials with oven knob covers
- Consider only putting this appliance on once your child has gone to bed



*Oven Knob Covers*

Tampering with oven knobs

- Covering knobs with covers/guards
- If you have a gas hob, consider installing a lockable gas-pipe valve; usually key operated
- If this is an electric oven and the child does it in order to watch the digital numbers change, provide them with a small digital clock of their own to play with



*Lockable Gas Pipe Valve*

Burning hands on electric hobs

- Electro-magnetic energy heats an Induction Hob – pan gets hot but hob surface does not. See local kitchen suppliers – two rings roughly £200, 4 rings roughly £300.

Turning on sink taps


- Flood prevention plug. Fits inside sink and prevents overflow risk




*Flood Prevention Plug*


- Fit a stopcock to sinks / baths / toilet pipework to cut water supply (for example, do this during the night time). Turn on/off with the flick of a switch. [www.surestop.co.uk](http://www.surestop.co.uk)

		 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sure Stop</i></p>
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<p>Opening cupboard/drawer or fridge doors to access excess food or potentially dangerous items (sharp objects and cleaning chemicals / washing powders)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep cleaning products and harmful chemicals out of the stretch reach of little legs and arms</li> <li>• Install child locks on cupboard doors / drawers containing hazardous chemicals and sharp objects; <b>magnetic style</b> prevents tampering for little Houdini's!</li> </ul> 
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<p><b>FAMILY ROOM</b></p>	<p>Open fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tall fire guard</li> <li>• If child enjoys staring at the flames closely, provide alternative slow-moving visual, for example lava lamp, fish tank, images of fish or fire on electronic tablet or TVs, snow globes etc</li> </ul>
	<p>Tripping over rugs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit rug grip material beneath rug (widely available online and in DIY stores)</li> </ul> 

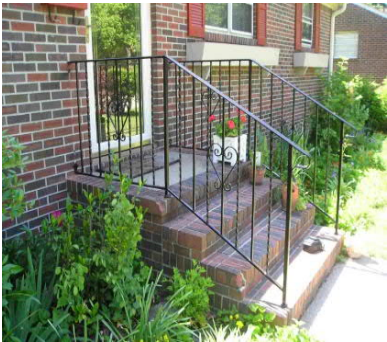



<p>Pulling over furniture and / or TV</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-tip furniture straps (attach to furniture and wall to fix in place) Widely available from DIY stores</li> </ul> 
<p>Opening cupboards with potentially dangerous items in (eg alcohol / glass / letter openers / batteries)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the first instance, keep these out of reach</li> <li>• If this is not possible, install child locks on cupboard doors containing these items (eg magnetic style to prevent tampering)</li> </ul>
<p>Ligatures and strangulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furniture with rounded edges, such as mirrors, tv cabinets and shelves (<a href="http://www.toughfurniture.com">www.toughfurniture.com</a>)</li> </ul>
<p>Hitting / smashing the tv screen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tv shatter-proof screen protectors</li> </ul>
<p>Pulling television off wall / tipping it over</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider mounting the tv in a television cabinet (see <a href="http://www.toughfurniture.com">www.toughfurniture.com</a>)</li> </ul>



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HALLWAY</b></p>	<p>Absconding via the front door</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access in and out</li> <li>• Security measures</li> <li>• Absconding</li> </ul> <p>Supervision level (awake, asleep and escorted)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prior to fitting anything extra, Ring Devon Fire Service</b> – they will visit your home for free and provide advice as to where you can fit extra locks in relation to fire safety and escape route access</li> <li>• <b>Ensure that fire and carbon monoxide alarms are regularly checked and batteries replaced as necessary</b></li> <li>• Fit a chain or bolt lock high up, out of child's reach. Keep the chain done up and door locked</li> <li>• If you do not have a chain and do not want to fit one, fit a cable window/door restrictor</li> <li>• If you have a key lock, key to be kept out of reach of child. Key could be kept in a key safe next to inside of front door</li> <li>• Alternatively, keep the key in situ and cover with a key guard</li> </ul>  <p style="text-align: right;"><i>key guard</i></p> <p><i>If these strategies have all been tried and not worked, it may be appropriate for OT to become involved to consider higher level interventions such as telecare PIR door sensors / safety gates to restrict access to the front door.</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STAIRS</b></p>	<p>Tripping / slipping / falling (due to physical/medical need)</p>
<p>Tripping / falling (due to slippery flooring or clutter sitting on the stairs)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure stairs are clutter free at all times</li> <li>• Consider carpeting wooden stairs</li> <li>• Bannisters on both sides of stairs – encourage to hold both</li> </ul>
<p>Jumping downstairs / swinging around bannisters : general deliberate unsafe behaviours</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage gross motor movements in more appropriate environments (eg the park, the garden, soft play areas)</li> <li>• Encourage engagement in calming activities which provide movement, for example yoga</li> <li>• Encourage engagement in disciplined movements, for example martial arts</li> </ul>
<p>Lack of comprehension of stair safety (ie younger children)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stair gates can be used for children up to 5 years old</li> </ul>




	Lack of comprehension of stair safety (ie younger children)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stair gates can be used for children up to 5 years old</li> </ul>
	Climbing over stair gates already in situ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove stair gates when your child begins to attempt climbing them</li> <li>Taller stair gates are available, but may be considered as restrictive for older children and <b>should not be used unless there is a clear need for a stair gate as a child gets older</b></li> </ul>
BATHROOM/TOILET	Playing with water- running taps whilst unattended. Burns or flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervise young children who have learning needs whilst they are in the bathroom.</li> <li>Wait outside of the door / monitor how long your child is in the bathroom – check in with them after a minute or two, depending on how long you expect them to be in the bathroom</li> <li>Burns - turn down the thermostat on your boiler to regulate maximum water temperature. Alternatively, install tap guard on hot tap (assess whether this is necessary all day or just at night)</li> <li>Flood prevention plug to fit inside sink and prevent overflow risk</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">   </div> <p><i>Tap Guard</i></p>
	Blocking / flooding the plugs / sinks / toilet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor bathroom use – is your child using the bathroom frequently, but not to use the toilet?</li> <li>Only allow access to amount of toilet roll needed (eg one roll maximum during the day and a few sheets ripped off during the night)</li> <li>Flood prevention plug</li> </ul>
	Hazardous chemicals & sharp objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first instance, keep these out of reach</li> <li>If this is not possible, install child locks on cupboard doors containing these items. Again, consider the magnetic type</li> </ul>

<b>SLEEP/BEDROOM</b>	Waking during the night and moving around unsupervised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your child is able to comprehend and understand risks, clearly explain the risks of this behaviour</li> <li>• <b>Why is your child awake during the night?</b> are they trying to meet a need - eg getting a drink or using the bathroom? Are they trying to get your attention? Do they experience nightmares? Are they sensitive to light or noise?</li> <li>• Ensure proper 'sleep hygiene' (no electronics within the bedroom, comfortable temperature, comfortable sleepwear etc)</li> <li>• Ensure that your child has access to a calming, consistent bedtime routine (warm bath, storytime, look at food/drink intake during the evenings)</li> <li>• Getting a drink – ensure a plastic cup or sucky top bottle of water is left within your child's bedroom at night</li> <li>• Using the bathroom – if this is frequent during the night, speak with your GP/Nurse and consider a referral to Specialist Continence Nurses</li> <li>• Sensitive to light – no excess light from outdoor security lights / lampposts / landing light underneath door. Blackout blinds can be useful, be consider impact on lack of sunlight in the morning, which naturally wakes the body up.</li> <li>• Sensitive to sound – No loud noise in the house during bedtime routine and after your child has gone to bed. Consider soundproofing single glazed windows – extra insulation can be fitted (expanding foam insulation, insulating tape and other similar products can be purchased easily from DIY shops)</li> </ul>
	Ligatures and strangulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furniture with rounded edges, such as mirrors, wardrobes and headboards.</li> </ul>
<b>VENTILATION</b>	Radiators – heat and climbing Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a child uses a radiator as a means to climb, it may be necessary to install a cover over the radiator to prevent it falling off the wall.</li> <li>• Reduce the risk of burning –turn down the thermostat on the radiator</li> <li>• Consider under floor heating</li> <li>• Open small windows for ventilation or install window restrictors to maintain ventilation.</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FIRE</b></p>	<p>Fire alerts, ability to escape doors &amp; windows</p>	<p>Devon and Somerset Fire Service offer free Home Fire Safety Check. (0800 05 02 999)  The check takes no longer than 5 minutes after which a home fire safety visit may be offered.  The visit takes less than 30 minutes; a free smoke detector can be fitted if required.</p> <p>Some simple steps to reduce the risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Fit a working smoke alarm</li> <li>2 Take care when cooking and never leave cooking food attended</li> <li>3 Plan and practise your escape route</li> <li>4 Make a bedtime check</li> <li>5 Don't overload sockets</li> <li>6 Put cigarettes right out</li> <li>7 Use candles carefully</li> <li>8 Have your chimney swept regularly</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GARDEN</b></p>	<p>Varying levels and steps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If child has reduced mobility or is unsteady on their feet, consider how they will move between different levels and navigate steps. Are there hand rails in place?</li> <li>• If there are slippery surfaces (grass or concrete slopes), consider laying safety anti-slip rubbering matting / rubber grass mats</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; flex-wrap: wrap;">     </div>

	<p>Injury from gardening tools / chemicals / equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securely lock these away in a shed / suitable cupboard and <b>never</b> leave these unattended</li> <li>• If your child is helping in the garden, <b>never</b> leave them unsupervised and do not allow them to use heavy, dangerous electrical equipment</li> </ul>
	<p>Absconding via the garden</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all fences are properly maintained with no broken/damaged panels – property owner is responsible for repairs &amp; maintenance</li> <li>• Supervise/keep an eye on young children in the garden</li> <li>• Gate locks should be high up, out of your child's reach</li> <li>• If objects are climbed upon to abscond, ensure these are in the middle of the garden, not up against walls/fences</li> <li>• Consider fitting a roller barrier to top of fence (<a href="http://www.insight-security.com/roller-barrier">www.insight-security.com/roller-barrier</a>)</li> </ul>
	<p>Ponds and paddling pools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Always</b> closely supervise children around water</li> <li>• Fencing around or coverings over a pond can reduce the risk of accidents</li> <li>• If a pond or paddling pool is not in use, drain the water out</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>
	<p>Child puts everything in their mouth!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure there are no poisonous plants/flowers in the garden or house</li> <li>• Where possible, remove gravel and small stones from the garden</li> <li>• Be aware of the toxic effects of pesticides / slug pellets / weed killer. Avoid using these where possible</li> </ul>
	<p>Slips / trips / cuts when using play equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove or quickly repair broken or damaged play equipment</li> <li>• Supervising children who are consistent risk takers when using play equipment</li> <li>• Place a net around trampolines to reduce risk of falls</li> </ul>

	Running into the road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it is possible, encourage children to play in a space which is not adjacent to a road</li> <li>• If not possible, fit driveway guard block across the driveway as a visual prompt and to prevent balls rolling into the road</li> </ul> 
STORAGE	Accessing the shed or garage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close supervision – there is usually no need for a child to access this area</li> <li>• Padlocks on the shed and keys kept hidden / out of child's reach</li> <li>• Garage kept locked / close supervision – there is usually no need for a child to access this area</li> <li>• Hazardous chemicals kept high up on shelves out of child's reach</li> </ul>

### **Installation**

If you are unsure as to how to fit any safety equipment, please contact your local 'handyman' service who will be able to assist you to fit this safely and appropriately. If you live in privately rented, Council or Housing Association property, always ensure that you have gained the property owners' permission prior to making alterations (eg window restrictors, stair gates, gas isolations taps, door locks).

### **How can Occupational Therapy help?**

If you have tried the strategies suggested and you feel that your child is still at risk of injury or harm, you can make a referral to Occupational Therapy, who can provide further advice.

## **LINKS TO USEFUL RESOURCES**

**Alzheimer's Society** - <https://shop.alzheimers.org.uk/daily-living-aids>  
*Many of the home safety recommendations which apply to adults with Dementia are also applicable to children.*

**Safetots** - <https://www.safetots.co.uk/>

**Babydan** <http://www.babydan.com/page1036.aspx>

**Kiddicare** <http://www.kiddicare.com>

**Locking cooker Valve** <https://www.sgn.co.uk/Safety/Locking-Cooker-Valve/>

**The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** <https://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/child-safety/>

**NHS Baby Safety Tips** - <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/baby-safety-tips.aspx>

**Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service** - <https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/>

### **Home Safety Booklet (Fire Service)**

[https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/documents/DS2012-125HomeSafetyBooklet\\_screen.pdf](https://www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/documents/DS2012-125HomeSafetyBooklet_screen.pdf)

**Well Child (charity who may assist with minor home & garden adaptations)** - <https://www.wellchild.org.uk/supporting-you/garden-bedroom-makeovers/>

<http://www.diy.com/departments/home-furniture-storage/home-furnishings/kids-dcor/nursery-decor/childrens-safety/DIY1375926.cat>

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.