

Pediatric Corner

By Dr. Michael Anderson, MD

CHILDREN'S PEDIATRIC CENTER: NORTHSIDE

Spring-cleaning: Don't sweep child safety basics under the rug

Spring cleaning doesn't have to be such a chore, especially when you get motivated by knowing that the following spring cleaning activities will help to keep your kids safe.

Police your medicine cabinet. The medicine cabinet isn't meant to be a storage area for all the medicines your child has ever been prescribed. For whatever reason, however, parents do seem to end up having left over or half used prescriptions in their medicine cabinet. Spring-cleaning is the perfect time to get rid of them and any expired over-the-counter medicines that you find.

Smoke alarm and CO detector check. If you didn't replace the batteries in your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors at the start or end of daylight saving time, do it now. It's also a good time to test your smoke alarms and CO detectors, although this should be done each and every month. You can also use this time as an opportunity to review and rehearse your family's designated fire escape plan.

Streamline toy boxes. Many parents use spring cleaning as an excuse to go through and get rid of toys that their kids no longer play with, but you can also use it as a time to check the toys that they do still play with and get rid of those that are broken and can't be repaired. When considering toy safety, you should be especially watchful for: splinters or sharp edges on wooden toys, weak or loose parts that could fall off and become a choking hazard, broken pieces, leaking batteries, loose screws and bolts, especially on things like playground equipment and ride on toys (bicycles, scooters, skateboards, etc.) and, loose or exposed wires in electrical toys.

Childproof your home. Even if your home is well 'childproofed', with latches on cabinets, gates on stairs, and covers on doorknobs, you do have to regularly inspect them to make sure they are still working properly. Cabinet and drawer latches and locks are especially prone to wear and tear, which may allow your child to get in them and get to any unsafe items you have stored in them.

Pull Quote: Be ready for recalls. You should always be watching for reports and alerts about recalled products, but if you don't, spring cleaning time is a good time to check and see if any toys or household products in your home have been recalled.

Make sure car seats are ready to roll. Checking your child's car seat to make sure it still fits and is installed properly is another thing that you should be doing much more often than during spring cleaning, but it's a good time to think about it all the same. Is your child ready to move up to a booster seat? Is he or she ready to move up to regular seat belts?

Take the time to make sure your kids are safe. Parents are often advised to do many things to keep their kids safe and prevent unnecessary injuries. I think that although many parents understand the need to be mindful of their children's safety, they still often wonder if they really need to do everything that is recommended. Do you really need locks on your cabinets, covers on electrical outlets, or a gate around your pool? Can your kids be too safe? Personally, here at the Anderson household we try to exercise the thinking that you and your children can never be too safe.

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