

# Keep me Close, Keep me Safe

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## Easy tips to keep your child safe

Parenting can be a challenging and draining job, especially when your main priority is to keep your child healthy and safe. Each year in Canada, more children die from injuries than any other cause. Safety proofing your home is a good start, but seeing and hearing your children at all times is the best way to protect them from injuries. While active supervision is key to your child's health and safety, other chores and demands can often get in the way.

This booklet suggests fun and easy tips that can help you complete your daily tasks while keeping your children close and safe when they are playing and exploring.

## General Safety Tips

1. Change your expectations. Don't expect to complete all of your chores. Caring for your children is a full-time job that starts from the moment they wake up to the time they go to bed. It's a job that requires you to be alert and responsible for 12 hours or more with no breaks, so it's difficult to also clean the house, cook meals, run errands, shop, do laundry or any of the other chores involved in having a family.
2. Simplify your daily tasks. If you make a to-do list, be realistic about what you put on the list. Rate the items on your list according to how important they are. Accept that as a parent it is going to take longer to get things done, and only do what is really necessary.
3. Be Creative. When you really need to run an errand, hire a babysitter or trade babysitting time with a friend. Think about getting a group of parents together to exchange babysitting services, or check to see if there is a group at your local community centre or Ontario Early Years Centre.

## Safety Tips Around the Home

1. **Make a few special bags of "goodies" filled with toys that you can bring out when doing chores.** Have one bag for when you're preparing meals, another for when you're on the phone or computer, and another for doing laundry. If this special bag is only used at these times and kept out of sight at other times, then your child will be more interested in playing with the contents. Some ideas for these bags include:
  - Crayons or washable markers, and paper.
  - Pictures from magazines that your child can identify or name. For young children, consider laminating the pictures or glueing them to cardboard. Play a game with your child by having him find a certain picture, such as one of a washing machine or a fire truck, and so on.
  - Photographs of family and friends so your child can identify his relatives, such as cousins, grandparents, and so on.
  - Letters or words written on paper (for older children) that your child can match to pictures or objects. Use your imagination and consider your own child's interests.
2. **Give your child soft blocks to play with while you are busy.** Encourage your child to count the number of blocks they can stack or ask them to stack all of the red blocks, then all of the blue blocks. Safe activities that keep your child interested and engaged when you can't play with him directly will help prevent injuries.

3. **Use masking tape to mark an area on the floor that is 30 to 40 centimetres out from, and around the stove.** Call it the "no-go zone" and teach your child not to cross the line, as the inside area is for adults only.
4. **Keep a low cupboard filled with safe objects for your child to play with while you are in the kitchen.** Fill it with plastic bowls, containers, measuring cups, spoons, and so on, so he can imitate you cooking.
5. **Use a portable or cellular telephone when your child is having a bath.** You can also let the answering machine pick up the message, or let the person call back later. No call is more important than the safety of your child.

## **Safety Tips Away From Home**

1. Swap babysitting services with a friend or neighbour so you can shop without your children. This may be quicker and safer than taking your children along. Taking turns with your partner or a friend, and shopping in the evenings may be easier for you and your family.
2. Interact with your child when doing errands. This will keep them interested in what you are doing and saying, and not as likely to reach for things or try to climb out of the shopping cart. Let your child hold onto the grocery list or some of the items in the grocery cart (such as crackers or bread, not eggs!) Ask your child to point to certain colours or to find certain grocery items, such as the apples or oranges.
3. Pack a few tiny books in a pencil case or makeup bag. Getting them out of the bag is an intricate and time-consuming activity for a small child, and it gives your child something to hold onto and "read."
4. Give your child a play phone to have pretend conversations with you when shopping. Talk about what you are buying, what their favourite fruit is, or what they want for supper.
5. Bring a play camera or binoculars with you to the store to play "I Spy" games.
6. Sing a song, or play a finger game to keep your child distracted while waiting in line. For example, you could sing:

"Round and round the garden, like a teddy bear"  
(Walk your fingers 'round and round' your child's palm),  
"One-step, two-step"  
(Move your finger up his arm)  
"Tickle you under there!"  
(End up by tickling under his arm).

### **Keep me Close, Keep me Safe**

**Closely supervising your child will keep him safe and give you peace of mind that you are doing a great job as a parent.**

**For more information on children and safety, or other parenting topics, call the Renfrew County & District Health Unit - Health Info Line at 735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097 Ext 666.**

**For more information about the Ontario Early Years Centres, call 1-866-821-7770 or go to [www.ontarioearlyyears.ca](http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca)**