



A Home Safety Checklist

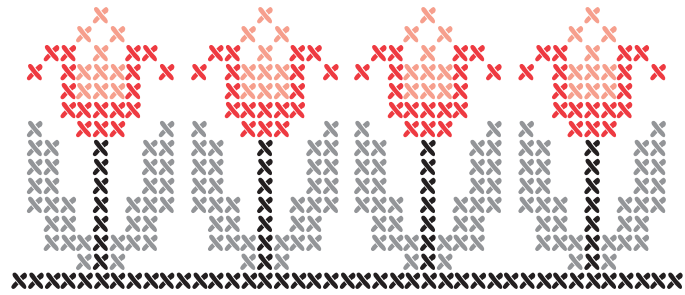


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This is a booklet of checklists. You can use it to check your home for safety and health hazards. We've listed tips to help you rid your home of things that cause the worst injuries or deaths. If you rent, your landlord may need to do some of these things, but there are many things you can do yourself. Follow as many of these as you can to lower your family's risk of injury or death.



By far, more people are hospitalized from *falls* than any other home injury. In every room, falls can be avoided. Tips to help avoid falls will have a picture of stairs in front of them (like the one to the left).



Fires are the leading cause of death from injuries for children ages 5 to 9, and rank in the top ten for most other New Yorkers. You can prevent fires and plan and practice your escape. Quick action saves lives! Smoke alarms give you more time to get out. Fire safety tips in this booklet will start with a picture like the one on the left.



Accidental *poisonings* at home cause many hospital stays for all age groups. People can be poisoned by food, household cleaners (soaps and bleaches), lead, carbon monoxide gas, or medicines. Carbon monoxide detectors can warn you of a problem, but it is still important to follow all the poisoning tips, which are marked like the picture on the left.



For children under 10 years old, *scalds* (burns with hot liquid or steam) are next most common injury leading to hospital stays.



Suffocation causes many deaths and hospital stays for children, young adults and adults over 45. Ideas for preventing suffocation begin with the picture to the left.



Drowning leads to many hospitalizations and deaths, mostly in people under 25.



Homes need *fresh air* to remove odors, moisture, asthma triggers, and other pollutants. Most of the time, opening windows is a good way to get fresh air. But if outdoor air quality is poor – for example, from a high pollen count, ozone, pesticide sprays or smoke from fires – keep the windows closed and set your air conditioner to recirculate.

Finally, there are tips for



preventing diseases carried by *pests*,



avoiding *cuts*, and



avoiding *electrical shocks*.

Call the New York State Department of Health toll-free at **1-800-458-1158** to learn more about any of these tips. We hope this booklet helps you to make your home a *safer home*.



EVERY ROOM



- ☐ Keep walkways clear and well lit.



- ☐ If your home was built before 1978, it probably has lead paint. Remodeling projects that disturb lead paint can spread lead dust through the home. Ask your local or state health department for low-dust remodeling tips.



- ☐ Damp mop and damp dust (sponge or microfiber dust cloths) at least weekly. Dust can make asthma and other breathing problems worse. Lead in dust can get into children's bodies and cause health problems.



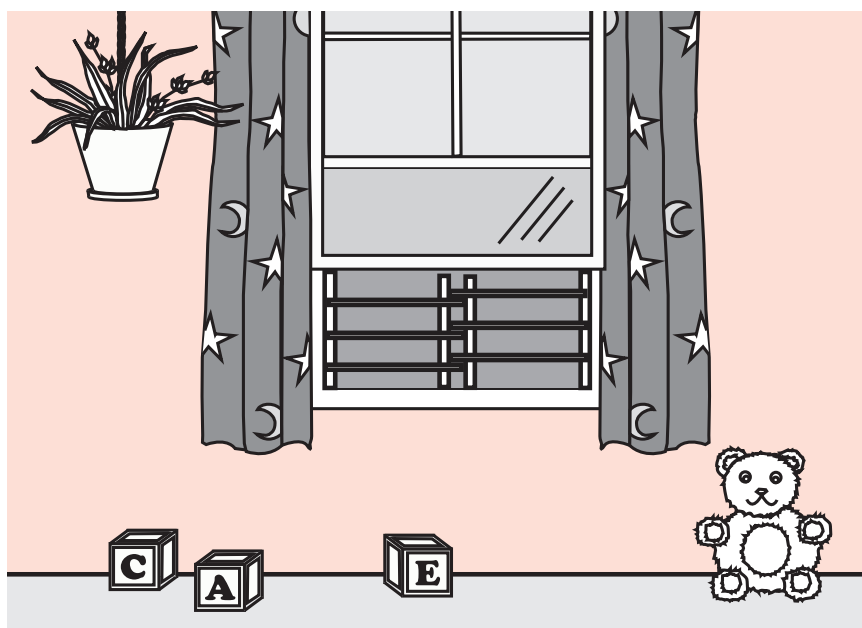
- ☐ Supply enough fresh air throughout the house. Make sure at least one window in each room opens. When you can, take smelly projects outside. Air the house well if you must do these projects indoors.

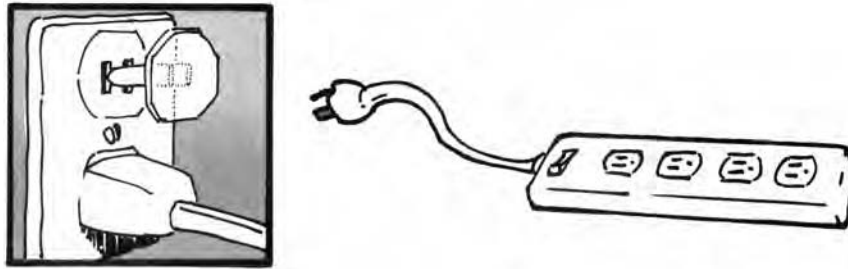


- ☐ Empty cleaning buckets, wading pools, and other containers that hold water. Young children can drown in even tiny amounts of water.



- ☐ Use window guards in upstairs windows to prevent dangerous falls. Check with your code enforcement officials, too. Window guards are required in some localities, including New York City and Yonkers.





- ☐ Fill unused outlets with plastic safety plugs if there are toddlers in the house. Keep electrical cords away from small children.



- ☐ For added safety, use ground-fault circuit interrupter power strips (cords that turn on and off) instead of extension cords.



- ☐ Be careful with extension cords. Too many items on a cord can start a fire. Some appliances should only be used with thick, heavy-duty cords.



- ☐ Place lights so they can be turned on without walking through a dark area.



- ☐ Remove cords or wires that cross walkways.



- ☐ Have an electrician install or inspect your wiring.



- ☐ Fix or replace frayed or cracked electrical cords.



- ☐ Never nail or staple wiring to walls or baseboards.



- ☐ Make sure all electrical devices have passed testing by a recognized lab. Look for UL or ETL on the label.



- ☐ If you have fuses, always use the correct size. Never use coins! The fuse box should be labeled. If it's a 15-amp circuit, use only a 15-amp fuse. Anything higher is a fire hazard.





☐ Use only the sizes and types of light bulbs listed for your lamps so they do not overheat.



☐ Keep a bulb in all light fixtures (even a burned-out bulb) to prevent electric shocks.



☐ Be sure electric heaters are grounded (three-prong plug). Connect them directly to wall outlets (do not use extension cords). Never leave a child alone in a room with a space heater.



☐ Place space heaters where they can't be tipped over, and away from furniture, beds and curtains. Ask your local or state health department for the "Supplemental Space Heaters" fact sheet.



☐ Be sure any wood burning equipment is properly installed. Inspect it often for buildup and clean stovepipes and chimneys each fall, and as needed throughout the heating season. Keep small children away from the wood burning area.

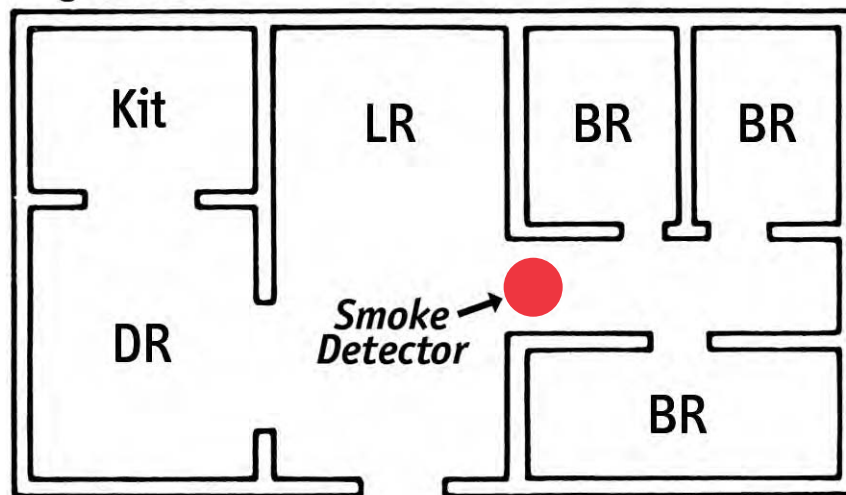


☐ Think about making your home a non-smoking place, especially if children, pregnant women, or people with breathing problems, such as asthma, live there. For free help quitting, call **1-866-NYQUITS**.



☐ Use a smoke detector on every floor, and be sure one is placed near each sleeping area. Do not place smoke detectors in the kitchen.

Single Level





- ☐ Use a carbon monoxide detector. Follow advice on the package about where to place it. Ask your fire department for guidance.



- ☐ Check detectors twice a year to make sure they work properly. Replace alkali batteries every time and all other batteries if needed. Replace detectors more than 10 years old. Clean detectors with a hair dryer or vacuum cleaner hose. Dust inside the alarm can stop it from working properly.



- ☐ **Always** keep matches, lighters and candles away from children.



- ☐ Carefully dispose of matches, lighters and cigarette butts. Remember, smoking is unhealthy for everyone in the house, including children!



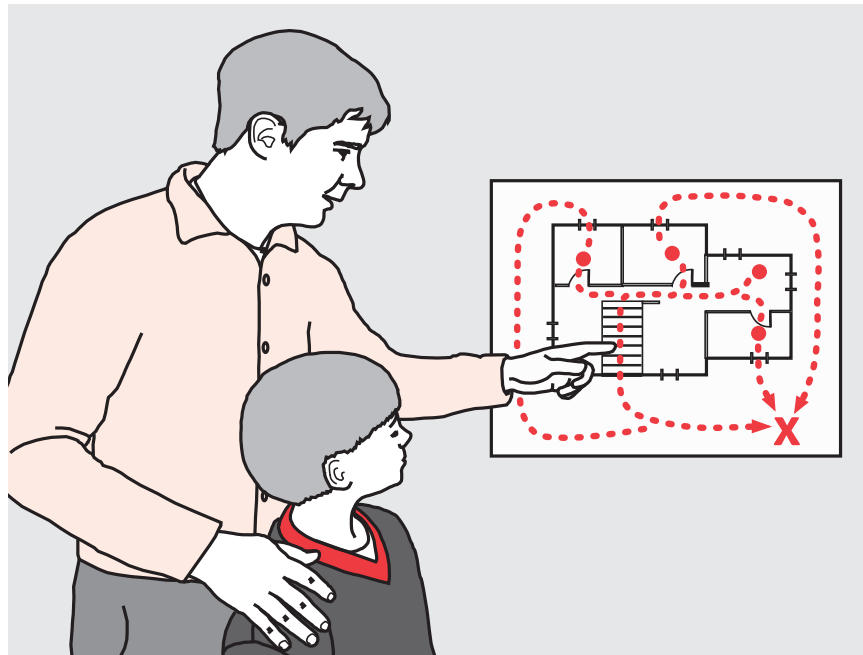
- ☐ In case of fire, crawl out below the smoke.



- ☐ Teach all adults and children in the household how to “stop, drop and roll” if their clothes catch fire.



- ☐ Plan and practice using two emergency exits from the home. Practice regularly as a family, even at night when children are asleep. Use the detector’s test setting so family members will know the sound of the alarms.



KITCHEN



- ☐ Wash your hands well with soap and water **before** preparing food and **after** using the bathroom, handling uncooked food, changing a diaper, or touching pets. Wash for at least 20 seconds or while singing the first verse of your favorite song.



- ☐ If your home was built before 1986, there might be lead solder in the water pipes. Run the water until it is cold to the touch before using it for cooking or drinking. Never use hot water for baby's formula!



- ☐ Use direct, even lighting over the stove, sink, counter, and where food is cut or sliced.



- ☐ Keep electrical cords away from the sink and stove. Do not use extension cords in the kitchen. Unplug appliances when not using them.



- ☐ Use ground fault circuit interrupters (plugs that reset) near the sink.



- ☐ Avoid loose, flowing clothing while cooking.



- ☐ Do not heat your home with a cooking stove! It can build up carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas with no odor. People who breathe too much carbon monoxide can get very sick or even die.



- ☐ Use an exhaust fan over the stove to clear moisture and cooking odors. Fans that vent outside work best, if they are allowed in your community.



- ☐ Keep oven mitts and towels away from cooking surfaces.



- ☐ Store items that might attract children (candy, cookies, etc.) away from the stove, and *never* above the stove.





☐ Keep hot liquids (cups of tea, coffee, soup) and sharps (knives, scissors) out of children's reach.



☐ When cooking, turn pot handles to the back of the stove and away from other burners.



☐ Keep your food preparation areas clean! Make counters easily cleanable. Toss out worn or grooved cutting boards, which don't clean well.



☐ Control pests by taking away their food and water. Clean food and water spills right away, and store food and trash in tightly sealed containers.



☐ Never mix cleaning products together! The fumes can cause sickness or death.



☐ Buy cleaning products in child-resistant packaging when you can. Never put non-food items like bleach, pesticides or cleaners into food containers.



BATHROOM



☐ Use grab bars and non-skid mats in bathtubs and showers.



☐ Always watch young children when they are bathing.



☐ Open a window or use an exhaust fan while showering to clear moisture from the room.



☐ Use ground fault circuit interrupters (plugs that reset) in the bathroom.



☐ Unplug small appliances such as hair dryers, shavers and radios when not using them.
Keep them away from water in sinks and tubs.



☐ Make sure there are no leaks in the plumbing.



☐ Use a night light.



STAIRS



- ☐ Use toddler gates on stairs if there are small children. Children can get trapped in older, “accordion style” gates. To prevent strangulation, do not use these gates.



- ☐ Always keep stairways clear of tripping dangers. Avoid storing items there, even for a short time. Make sure that stair coverings are not loose.



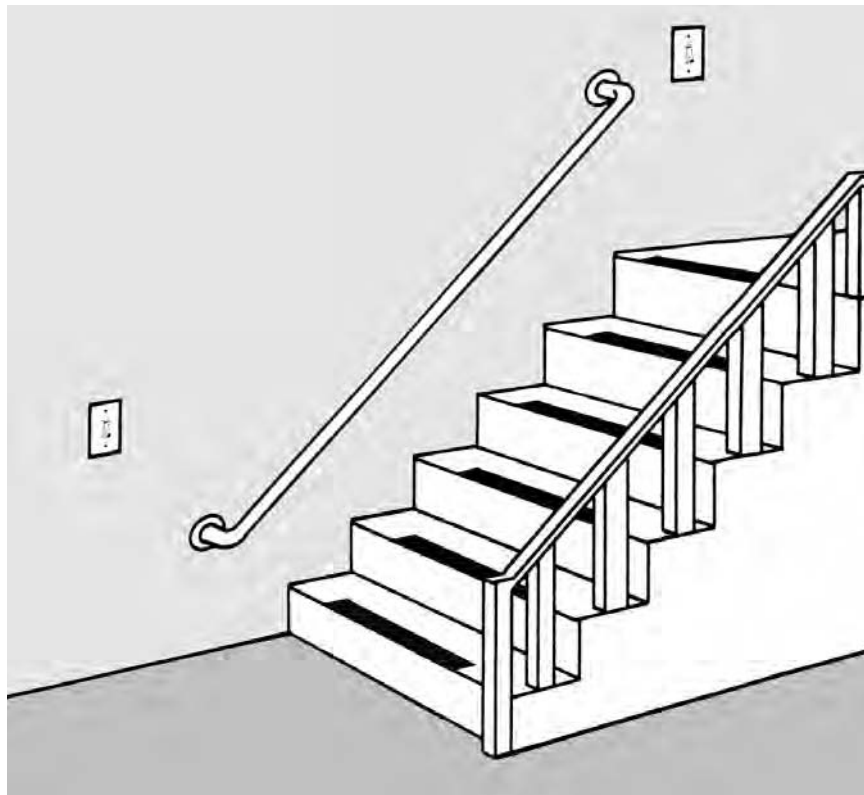
- ☐ Light the stairs well. Use light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs.



- ☐ Use strong handrails that run from top to bottom on both sides of the stairs.



- ☐ Make the edges of the steps easy to see.



NURSERY



- ☐ Be very careful of paint on a “hand-me-down” crib. Paint on cribs made before February 1978 may contain lead.



- ☐ Check the crib mattress for a snug fit: the space between the mattress and the railing should be smaller than two fingers wide. Use a firm mattress.



- ☐ Make sure there are no corner posts on the crib.



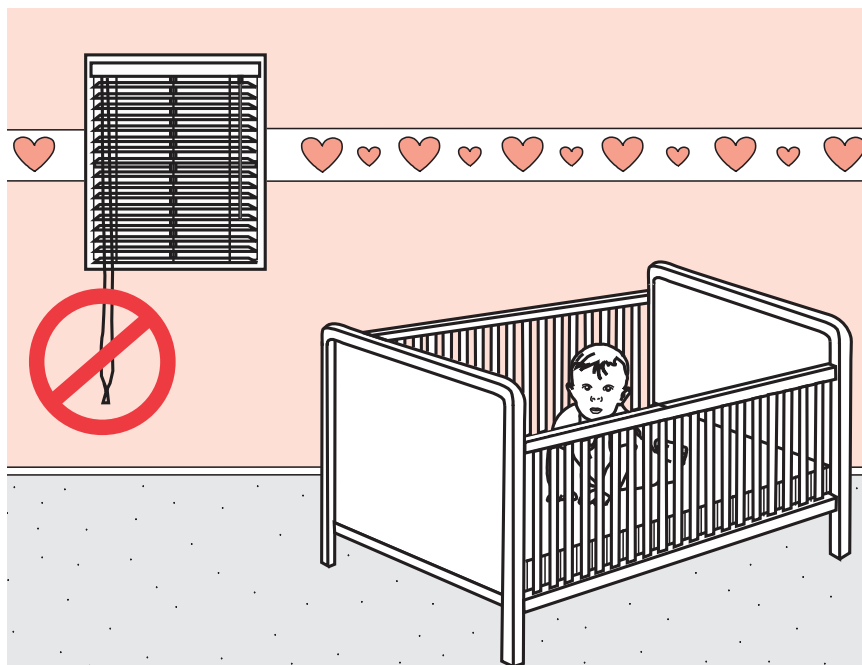
- ☐ Do not use pillows, quilts, sheepskins, stuffed toys or loose bedding in your child’s sleep area. Make sure the baby blanket cannot cover baby’s head. Or choose sleep clothing, such as one-piece blanket sleepers, instead of a blanket. Make sure the baby is not too warm.

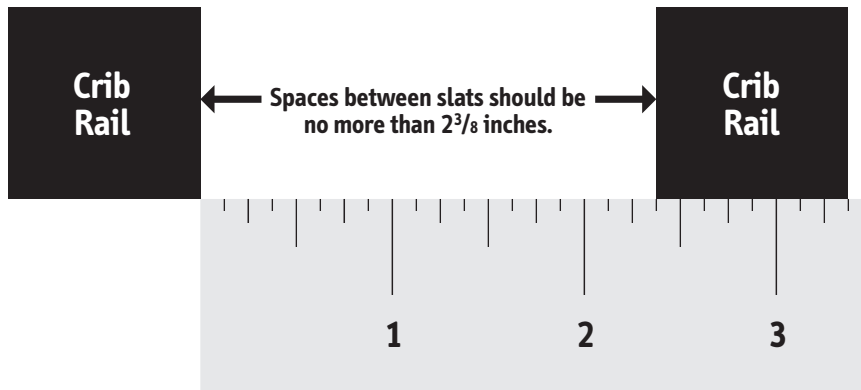


- ☐ Place infants on their back for sleeping, not on their side or stomach. Make sure everyone who cares for your baby knows to place them on their back – even for naps. Do not let the baby sleep on a couch or arm chair with adults or other children.



- ☐ Place cribs and toddler beds away from windows. Curtain or blind cords can strangle children. Window sills may be painted with lead paint or have lead dust settled on them.





☐ Choose cribs with no loose slats. Spaces between slats should be no more than $2\frac{3}{8}$ inches.



☐ Prevent falls! Use safety straps or guard rails on changing tables, beds, and other places used for baby.



☐ Make sure the toy chest has a lightweight lid, no lid, or a child safety hinge.



BEDROOM



☐ Place lamps or light switches and flashlights near each bed.



☐ Keep a telephone next to the bed, with doctor's phone number on or near the phone.



☐ Do not burn candles in the bedroom. Almost half of candle fires start in the bedroom.



☐ NEVER smoke in bed!



☐ Do not cover or fold electric blankets when they are on. "Tucking in" an electric blanket can overheat it and start a fire.



☐ Wash bedding weekly in hot water to lessen dust and help with breathing problems.



BASEMENT/GARAGE/LOWEST LEVEL



- ☐ Be sure all work areas are well lit.



- ☐ Ground all power tools (three prong plug) and make sure guards are in place. Follow directions for safe use of tools.



- ☐ Keep household chemicals, such as pesticides and pool chemicals, away from children.



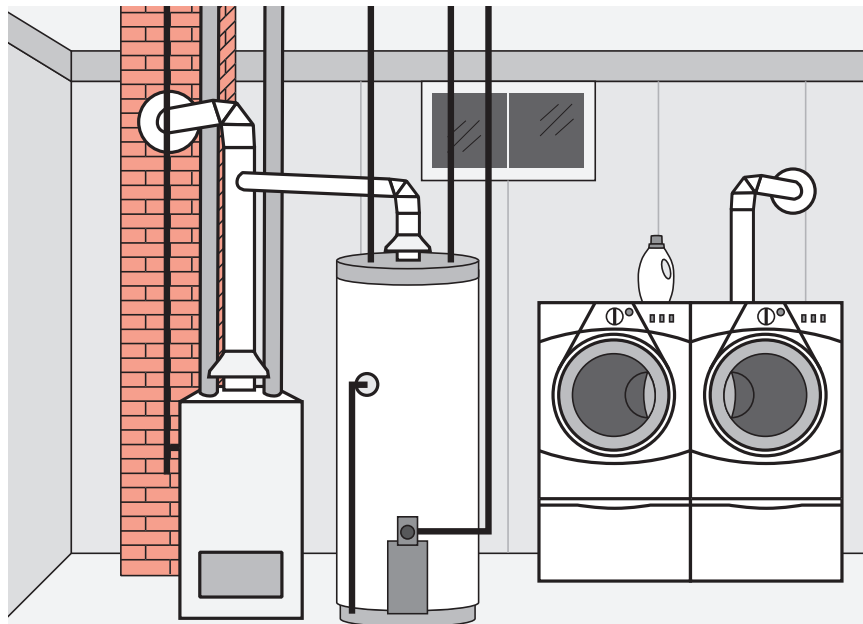
- ☐ Tightly cap containers of chemicals that have fumes, such as paints and cleaning products. Do not use them near furnaces, water heaters, and other heat sources. **ALWAYS STORE GASOLINE OUT OF THE HOME.** Only use a container labeled for gasoline use.



- ☐ Keep small children out of the garage and basement.



- ☐ Set the hot water to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This prevents scalds but is hot enough for cleaning dishes. Use an anti-scald device for water temperatures above 120 degrees.





- ☐ Use a dehumidifier to control musty smells in the basement. Empty and clean it often.



- ☐ Vent clothes dryers outside with a flexible metal vent. Clean the lint filter every time to prevent fire.



- ☐ Test for radon and keep levels low. Call your local health department or the NYS Health Department at **1-800-458-1158** to learn how.



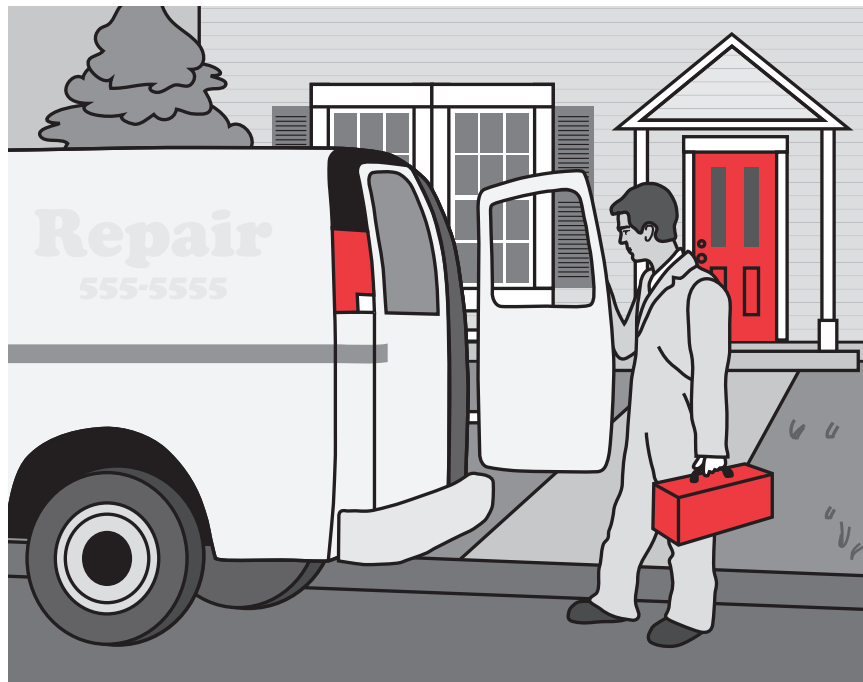
- ☐ Each fall, have all heating and any gas-fired appliances checked by a professional.



- ☐ Each fall, check any chimneys for blockage, clean the heating vents and change the filter on your furnace.



- ☐ Plug openings around holes used to bring water, electricity, telephones, etc. into the building. This keeps pests, radon gas and other fumes outside.



OUTDOORS



- ☐ Wear gloves while handling bird feeders or doing other yard work. Or, wash your hands well when you are done.



- ☐ Use a mat at the doorway to catch dirt from shoes.



- ☐ Use lights for entry after dark.



- ☐ Keep walkways level and clear of ice and snow.



- ☐ Be sure stairs, retaining walls, railings, porches and balconies are in good condition and sturdy.



- ☐ Use safety railings on decks, porches and other raised areas.



- ☐ Use ground fault circuit interrupters (plugs that reset) outdoors.





- ☐ Fence off swimming pools or use other barriers to keep children out. For in-ground pools, use fencing at least four feet high with self-closing, self-latching gates.



- ☐ Play in grassy areas. Dirt may contain higher levels of lead.



- ☐ Learn CPR.



- ☐ Lower the number of mosquitoes by getting rid of standing water. Look at old tires, birdbaths, tree swings, rain gutters, etc.



- ☐ Backyard burning, even of wood and papers, can worsen asthma and is also a fire hazard. Never burn trash or plastics! It puts toxic gases in the air.



- ☐ Keep bicycles in good repair, with working brakes, reflectors, and a light. Use reflective clothing for night-time riding.



- ☐ Be sure that all bicyclists wear helmets that meet the Consumer Product Safety Commission standards for every ride.



- ☐ Put children under 12 in the back seat of the car, away from the air bag. Until children are big enough for an adult seat belt, use the correct car seat or booster seat for their size.

IN THE EVENT OF AN INJURY OR POISONING

Don't wait for an emergency to look for a phone number! Most areas have "911" service, which can connect you to fire, police and ambulance crews. It's still a good idea to have your doctor's telephone number handy, as well as family or friends to call in case of an emergency. To speak with someone about a poisoning emergency, dial **1-800-222-1222**. Stay calm! Bring the container or bottle with you to the telephone when you call for assistance.



OTHER TOPICS

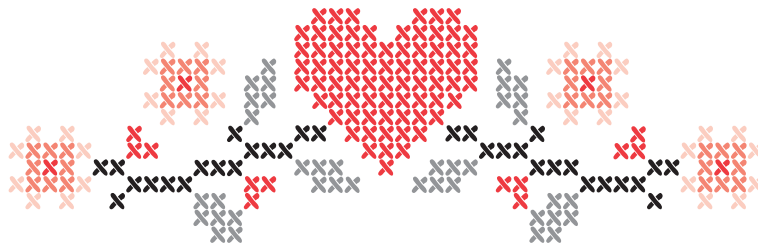
These are just a few tips to get you started. The NYS Health Department has more information on home health and safety topics. You can either call or go online. Visit our website at www.nyhealth.gov. Select “Health & Safety in the Home, Workplace and Outdoors” to learn more about lead paint, supplemental space heaters, carbon monoxide, indoor air, and children’s environmental health. Use the toll-free number **1-800-458-1158** to reach environmental health specialists.

If you want to quit smoking, call **1-866-NYQUITS**. From the internet address www.nyhealth.gov, select “Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention” for more about injury prevention or quitting smoking.

If you want to reduce your risk of tick and mosquito bites, ask for the booklet “Fight the Bite” or look on the internet at <http://www.nyhealth.gov>, choosing “Diseases and Conditions.”

To learn about preparing and weathering storms, floods and loss of power, ask for the booklet “Don’t Be Left in the Dark!” or look on the internet at <http://www.nyhealth.gov>. Choose “Health & Safety in the Home, Workplace and Outdoors,” then select “Emergency Preparedness,” then “Weather,” and “Weather Emergencies – Health and Safety Advice.”

To learn more about protecting your children from environmental exposures, ask for the booklet “Reducing Environmental Exposures: The Seven Best Kid-Friendly Practices” or look on the internet at <http://www.nyhealth.gov>. Choose “Health & Safety in the Home, Workplace and Outdoors” and find the children’s safety postings.



State of New York
Department of Health



New York Home Inspections
www.newyork-homeinspections.com