

Safe Haven-

A Look at the Nation's Knowledge and Use of Home Safety Products and Practices



FALLS • POISONINGS • FIRES AND BURNS • CHOKING/SUFFOCATION • DROWNING

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Introduction

Most adults across America believe they have the knowledge needed to make their homes a safe haven where their loved ones are protected from injuries. However, a recent Home Safety Council (HSC) survey polled adults in America on the safety products they have installed, as well as the safety actions they have taken at home, and the findings show there is much room for improvement. The survey found an alarming number of U.S. adults fail to appreciate the risk of home injury and lack the motivation and/or knowledge to reduce it. As a result, accidental home injuries are a major public health issue in the United States.

In fact, according to *The State of Home Safety in America™* Report, the Home Safety Council's most comprehensive study of home injuries, home-related injuries result in nearly 20,000 deaths and 21 million medical visits on average each year.¹ The five leading causes of home injury - falls, poisonings, fires and burns, choking/suffocation and drowning - combine to make up 90 percent of the total number of home injuries reported annually.¹

The Five Leading Causes of Home Injury



1

Falls



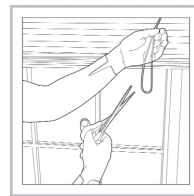
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Poisonings



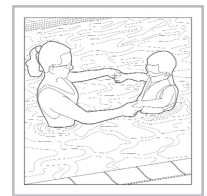
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Fires and
Burns



4

Choking/
Suffocation



5

Drowning

While the statistics may be shocking, the good news is that most home injuries are entirely avoidable with proper education and a few simple home safety modifications. In order to reduce the toll of home injuries, the Home Safety Council is working to raise awareness around the five leading causes of home injury and the actions and safety products needed to protect against such risks.

To find out what safety products and practices the U.S. public currently employs to protect themselves against home-related injury, the Home Safety Council recently commissioned Harris Interactive® to conduct a survey of adults ages 18 and older to uncover public knowledge and perceptions around the most common causes of home-related injury and the safety devices and actions that can prevent them. The survey findings reveal that while the majority of adults say they are knowledgeable about home safety, very few were able to name a safety action they have taken at home. The tendency to overstate their safety knowledge, coupled with failure to use safety products or take safety actions, create an alarming scenario that is placing families across the nation at serious risk for home-related injuries.

Key Findings

Self-Reported Safety Knowledge - U.S. Adults Think but Don't Act on Home Safety

The Home Safety Council Practices and Products Survey found that home safety is top-of-mind for U.S. adults, with

the vast majority of those surveyed (92 percent) reporting that they think about home safety often. More than eight out of ten adults surveyed also indicated they are very knowledgeable or somewhat knowledgeable about what they can do to make their homes safer, yet only one-third (36 percent) was able to name a safety action they had taken at home.

In fact, when survey respondents were asked to name what actions they had taken to protect their family members from an injury at home, nearly a quarter (23 percent) had no response and nearly one-fifth (18 percent) admitted they had done or do nothing. Alarming, more than one-quarter of adults (26 percent) said they are not worried about an injury occurring in their home.

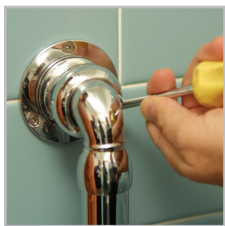
The chart below compares the safety actions survey respondents said they practice regularly when they were given a list of suggested safety behaviors to select from with the responses provided when they were asked an open-ended question about their safety behaviors. Without the aid of a list to select from, almost half of the adults surveyed could not or declined to provide an answer. While the adults were better able to identify the safety behaviors they practice regularly when given a list to choose from, only two-thirds said that they never leave pots unattended while cooking and only half said they clear clutter from the stairs or supervise children at all times in or near water.

Things Done to Keep Family Members Protected

List Provided		Open Ended	
Never Leave Pots Unattended	65%	Do Not Know/Declined to Provide an Answer	46%
Clear Clutter	50%	Have Done Nothing	18%
Supervise Children Near Water	49%	Clear Clutter	11%

Injury Prevention

With research consistently showing that the majority of home injuries result from falls, poisonings, fires and burns, choking/suffocation and drowning, the Safe Haven Products and Practices Survey aimed to uncover the safety actions families have taken or the products they have put in place specifically to protect against the five leading causes of home injury. The new data reveals that most homes in America lack the critical safety measures needed to protect against the most common home injuries.

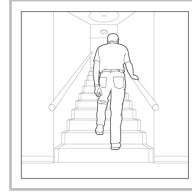
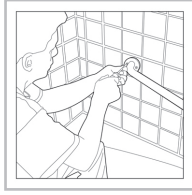


Falls Prevention

Every year, nearly 5.1 million people in America are injured by falls occurring in and around the home. As the leading cause of home injury, falls account for one-third of all unintentional home injury deaths, and more than 40 percent of all nonfatal home injuries.¹

While the circumstances surrounding the majority of falls in the home are unknown, research indicates that falls from stairs and steps are responsible for almost 20 percent of fatal falls.¹ The survey found that only about half of adults have taken any of the recommended actions to help prevent falls on the stairs in their own homes. Half of the adults surveyed indicated that they clear clutter from stairs; a little less than half indicated having lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs (48 percent); and less than one quarter have handrails on both sides of the stairs (22 percent).

HSC Falls Prevention Recommended Actions:



- Have grab bars in the tub and shower.
- Have bright lights over stairs and steps and on landings.
- Have handrails on both sides of stairs and steps.
- Use a ladder for climbing instead of a stool or furniture.
- Use baby gates at the top and bottom of the stairs, if babies or toddlers live in or visit your home.

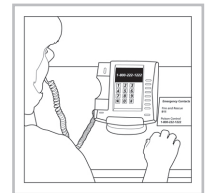
Poison Prevention



According to Home Safety Council research, poisoning is the second leading cause of unintentional home injury death in the U.S., and accounts for more than one-fourth of all home injury deaths.² Among the adults surveyed in the Safe Haven Products and Practices Survey, only one percent selected poisoning as their top concern when asked to choose from the five leading causes of home injury.

More than two million poisonings are reported to the nation's Poison Control Centers on average every year¹, yet less than one-fifth (18 percent) of the survey respondents indicated that they have posted the National Poison Control Hotline number next to the phones in their home. The Poison Control Center is always open and provides free and confidential advice about poisons in several languages.

HSC Poison Prevention Recommended Actions:



- Lock poisons, cleaners, medications and all dangerous items in a place where children can't reach them.
- Keep all cleaners in their original containers. Do not mix them together.
- Use medications carefully. Follow the directions. Use child-resistant lids.
- Install carbon monoxide detectors near sleeping areas.
- Call 9-1-1 if someone won't wake up, is having trouble breathing, or is having seizures. If the person seems okay, but you think they may have taken poison or if you have a question about poisons call 1-800-222-1222.

Home Fire and Burn Safety

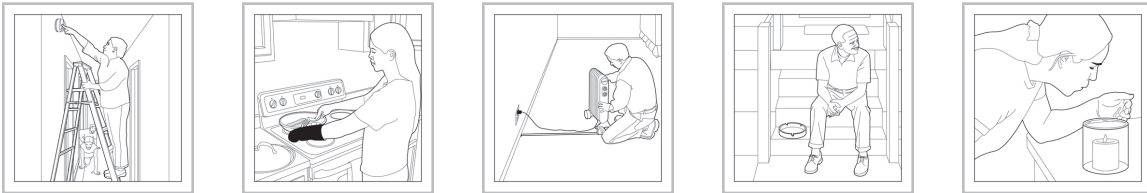


Fires and burns are the third leading cause of home injury-related death, causing an average of more than 3,400 fatalities each year.¹ Of all fire and burn-related injuries, 90 percent of fatalities occur in the home, the place where most people feel the safest.

Fire safety and survival begin with everyone in the household being prepared for a fire emergency. The Safe Haven Products and Practices Survey found that adults have taken

some of the recommended steps to prepare for and protect against fire emergencies, but there is still room for improvement. Most adults report they have working smoke alarms installed in their home (93 percent), but very few have a fire escape ladder (6 percent) or home fire sprinklers (3 percent). In addition to having the recommended fire safety devices, a well-rehearsed fire escape plan can help families safely exit the home in the event of a fire. Only one-quarter (26 percent) of the survey respondents have developed a family fire escape plan.

HSC Home Fire Safety Recommended Actions:



- Have working smoke alarms and hold fire drills. If you build or remodel a home, install fire sprinklers.
- Stay by the stove when cooking, especially when you are frying food.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn. Turn them off when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- If you smoke, smoke outside. Use deep ashtrays and put water in them before you empty them. Lock matches and lighters in a place where children can't reach them.
- Only light candles when an adult is in the room. Blow the candle out if you leave the room or go to sleep. Or, replace lit candles with battery-powered "flameless" candles.

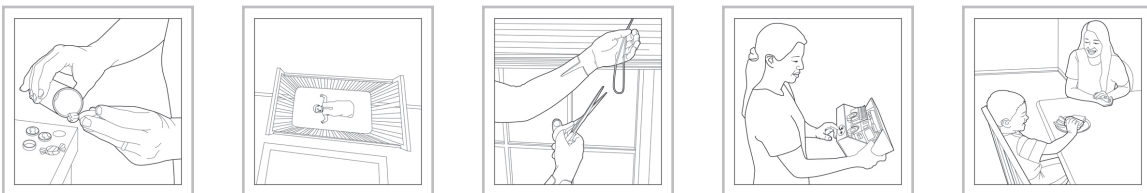
Choking/Suffocation Prevention



According to *The State of Home Safety in America™* Report, each year, unintentional choking and suffocation injuries result in an average of more than 1,000 fatalities. The leading cause of choking/suffocation related death is the inhalation and ingestion of food, causing obstruction of respiratory tract or suffocation.¹

Requiring children to sit while eating is key to avoiding choking and suffocation injuries among children, however only one-third (39 percent) of the adults surveyed indicated that they require children to be seated while eating.

HSC Choking/Suffocation Prevention Recommended Actions:



- Things that can fit through a toilet paper tube can cause a young child to choke. Keep coins, latex balloons and hard round foods, such as peanuts and hard candy, out of children's reach.
- Place children to bed on their backs. Don't put pillows, comforters or toys in cribs.
- Clip the loops in window cords and place them up high where children can't get them.
- Read the labels on all toys, especially if they have small parts. Be sure that your child is old enough to play with them.
- Cut food into small bites and tell children to sit down when they eat and to take small bites.

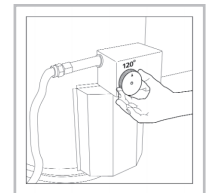
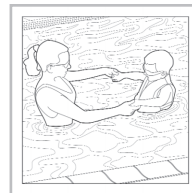
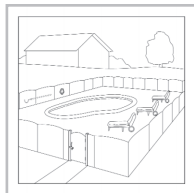
Water Safety



Drowning is the fifth leading cause of home injury death in the U.S. and Home Safety Council research shows that many drowning deaths at home are related to swimming pools and spas.¹ Children younger than age five have the highest rates of drowning and near-drowning injuries at home¹, yet more than half of the adults surveyed fail to supervise children when they are in or near water.

In addition to practicing constant and active supervision, there are several recommended pool safety and security products that can help reduce injuries in and around pools and spas at home. The Safe Haven Products and Practices Survey asked adults how frequently they swim in pools and to select which safety products, if any, are present at the pools where they swim. Of the respondents who said they swim in pools regularly, only about half indicated that any of the following safety items are present where they swim: four-sided pool fencing (53 percent), a self-latching gate (47 percent), a first aid kit (46 percent).

HSC Water Safety Recommended Actions:



- Stay within an arm's length of children in and around water. This includes bathtubs, toilets, pools and spas – even buckets of water.
- Put a high fence all the way around your pool or spa. Always keep the gate closed and locked.
- Empty large buckets and wading pools after using them. Store them upside down when not in use.
- Make sure your children always swim with a grownup. No child or adult should swim alone.
- Set your hot water heater at or below 120°F to prevent burns. Use a water thermometer to test bath water. Install special tub spouts and shower heads that prevent scald burns.
- To avoid suction entrapment, install multiple drains in all pools, spas, whirlpools and hot tubs. Check them often to ensure they are secure and not damaged. Use dome-shaped pool covers rather than flat ones.

Call to Action

Through national programs and partnerships, the Home Safety Council (HSC) aims to reduce the overall toll of home injuries by raising awareness around the leading causes of home injury and promoting simple actions adults can take to protect their family members. HSC works to educate the public on how to create a safe haven to protect their loved ones from home injuries. HSC calls for dedicated partners to support its comprehensive efforts to raise home safety awareness on multiple fronts and move closer toward achieving the goal of creating safer homes across America.

- Increase Awareness: Help increase safety awareness by recognizing the risks and spreading injury prevention messages that cover all of the five leading causes of home injury – falls, poisonings, fires and burns, choking/suffocations and drowning.
- Corporate Participation: Encourage corporate participation to promote home safety by asking your human resources manager or those in your community to incorporate home injury prevention in their overall employee health and wellness programs.
- Promote Safer Home Environments: Work with manufacturers to encourage the development of new and innovative safety products to help lessen the toll of home injuries on the public.
- Home Safety Legislation: Encourage your local and national government leaders to support funding for key home safety education programs and public policy initiatives to help reduce home injury risks.

- Promote Partnerships: Partner with local schools and educators to create and implement new educational programs to reach those in high-risk communities and age groups.

Appendix (A)

State of Home Safety in America™ Report

The State of Home Safety in America™ Report (2004) is the Home Safety Council's second comprehensive statistical report of home injuries in the United States, addressing causes, costs and victims. The Home Safety Council worked in conjunction with the University of North Carolina Injury Prevention Research Center to create a comprehensive benchmark of home injuries in 2002 and to update the body of research in a 2004 Edition.

The data sources for the study include the National Vital Statistics System, National Health Interview System, and National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey – Emergency Department. These data are compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Methodology

Safe Haven Home Safety Products and Practices Survey

The Home Safety Council commissioned Harris Interactive® to conduct a survey of U.S. adults to uncover the public's level of awareness around the most common causes of home injury and determine the safety actions adults in the U.S. have taken to protect themselves and their families from home injury. The survey was conducted online within the United States between April 6-10, 2007, among 2,322 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

With a pure probability sample of 2,322, one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- three percentage points. Sampling error for subsamples would be higher and would vary. However, that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and, therefore, no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Endnotes

1 Runyan CW, Casteel C (Eds.) *The State of Home Safety in America™: Facts About Unintentional Injuries in the Home*, 2nd edition. Washington, D.C.: Home Safety Council, 2004.

2 American Association of Poison Control Centers. *A Profile of US Poison Centers in 2004: A Survey Conducted by the American Association of Poison Control Centers*.
[HTTP://WWW.AAPCC.ORG/2004_POISON_CENTER_SURVEY_RESULTS.HTM](http://www.aapcc.org/2004_poison_center_survey_results.htm).

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