



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

## Keeping Your Home Safe for Your Child to Explore

Children learn through active play and exploration. Their natural curiosity helps them to discover the world around them, but as they explore, they do not automatically know what is safe and what is not. They may pull on things or put them in their mouths as they explore and experiment with them—not knowing that these actions may be dangerous.

An important job for you, as a parent or care provider, is to provide a safe place for your child to play and learn in. Accidents and injuries can be minimized by childproofing your home. Here are some general tips to help make your home safe for your child.

- ♥ Remove small objects that can be choking hazards.
- ♥ Put cleaning solutions, as well as sharp utensils, such as knives, out of your child's reach to prevent physical injury.
- ♥ Use safety latches on cabinet doors to prevent your child from getting hold of potentially harmful items such as chemicals, medications, or breakable objects.
- ♥ Keep all plastic grocery and garbage bags away from your child to prevent her from suffocating.
- ♥ Cover electrical outlets and keep cords out of reach to prevent injuries from electrical shock.

Be aware that you will need to review your childproofing strategies and make changes as your child grows and acquires new skills. This newsletter provides additional ideas on how to childproof your home for each age group and suggests safe activities you can do with your child at home.



### In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information** and suggestions about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development as a result of doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

1-4-12/14

# Infants

For the first few months of a baby’s life, home is where she spends the most time. You may notice that as she begins to crawl or even before that, she may pick things off the floor and put them into her mouth. Your baby is curious about her surroundings and doesn’t know that some things might pose a threat to her.

To keep your baby safe, start by looking at the house from her perspective. Bend down and crawl on the floor to see if there are any small items that she could ingest or any heavy objects that she could grab and pull to the ground as she actively moves about and explores. Keep these potential hazards out of the area that she’ll be in or block her access to them. Knowing what your baby sees will help you see and address the safety issues around your home.



The following are some additional tips to keep your baby safe at home:

- ♥ To prevent suffocation, put your baby to sleep on her back, without any pillows, toys, or soft bedding in the sleep area.
- ♥ Buckle your baby in when using a bouncy seat, swing, or high chair to keep her secure.
- ♥ Keep a hand on your baby while she is on a changing table or a raised surface to avoid falls.

## Activity for Infants: *Ready, Set, Crawl*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Encourage your baby to crawl by placing her on her hands and knees and gently rocking her back and forth
2. Place a toy in front of her, just out of her reach. Encourage her to reach for the toy with one hand. You can also position yourself in front of her and encourage her to touch your face. Don’t be surprised if she moves backwards first.
3. Talk to your baby while she tries to crawl or to reach for an object. Describe what she is doing and give her lots of positive encouragement.



*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*

## Toddlers

Toddlers are curious and more mobile, but are still mastering their coordination skills, which can lead to an increased risk of injuries caused by falls. Take a walk through your home to identify potential fall hazards. Then look for ways you can make the areas safer; by removing unsafe items, blocking access to dangerous areas, or making sure that if she tumbles (this is inevitable), she will not seriously injure herself. Your child should be supervised at all times as she explores inside and outside of your home.

The following are tips to help keep your home safe for your toddler:

- ♥ Install safety gates on the top and bottom of stairways, use locks on doors, and block access to lanai railings.
- ♥ Pad sharp corners of furniture or items made of glass.
- ♥ Actively supervise your child on stairs. Hold her hand when climbing up and down stairs.



### Activity for Toddlers: *Follow the Leader*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Tell your child that you are going to play a game. Explain that you want her to copy the movements that you do and to follow the instructions that you give.
2. Perform a movement that you know your child is capable of such as clapping her hands. Ask, "Can you clap your hands?" and then help your child make the movements. Keep doing this until your child seems to follow your lead.
3. Try other active movements such as jumping in place or marching from room to room. Describe and demonstrate the movements you want your child to do.
4. Praise her for listening and copying your movements. For example, "You did a good job of following directions. You were able to jump in place so many times!"
5. Take turns being the leader.



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)



# Preschoolers

Preschoolers are intentional in seeking new knowledge and experiences. It may not be enough to tell your child not to do something; she'll want to know why. This is a good age to start talking with your child about ways to be safe in the home. Weave your discussions about safety into daily activities such as a meal preparation or playing. Demonstrate ways to be safe and tell her why it is important. Have her help you write up some safety tips.

Here are some ways that you can talk about safety tips around the home.

- ♥ Teach your child about the dangers of playing with matches, lighters, and other flammable materials. Point out smoke detectors around the home and practice a fire escape route with your entire family.
- ♥ Point out areas where children can be active. Talk about safety rules such as no running in the house, climbing on furniture, or using drawers and shelves as steps.

- ♥ Instruct your child on what to do in an emergency. Teach her how to dial 911 and what to say on the phone in an emergency. Make sure your child knows what an emergency is. ("Is a cut an emergency? Is a fire an emergency?")



## Activities for Preschoolers: Cup Phones

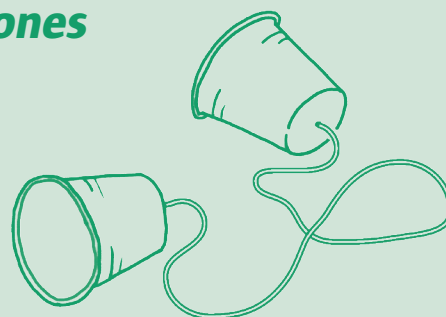
What You Need:

- 2 disposable cups (paper, plastic, or foam)
- String (about 3-4 feet)
- 2 toothpicks
- Tape

What to Do:

1. Make a small hole in the bottom of each cup.
2. Thread one end of the string through the hole in one of the cups, from the outside in.
3. Tie the end of the string around a toothpick to keep it anchored inside of the cup. Place a piece of tape over the toothpick to secure it to the bottom of the cup.
4. Repeat with the second cup, connecting it to the other end of the string.
5. Have your child hold up one cup to her ear while you do that same with the other, holding them so the string is taut.
6. Ask your child to practice what she would say in an emergency. Pretend you are the 911 operator and ask your child to explain what the emergency is and what kind of help she needs.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps her development and school readiness.)*



# How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

## Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles such as facial muscles, fingers, hands, and toes.
- ♥ Learn to use her body purposefully.

## Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to interact with others.
- ♥ Feel important and good about herself.

## Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase her observation, listening, and understanding skills, and attention span.
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions.

## Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination.
- ♥ Develop her curiosity about how things work.

## Kids in the Kitchen

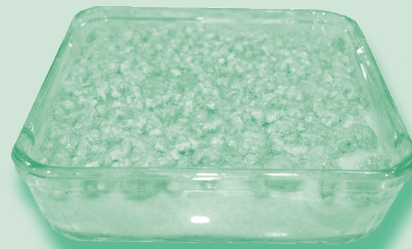
Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show her how to safely handle the items and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage her thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

### Sweet Potato Custard

Adapted from: [www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/html/recipes.html](http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/healthieryou/html/recipes.html)

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked sweet potato, mashed
- ½ cup banana (about 2 small), mashed
- 1 cup evaporated milk, fat-free
- 2 T brown sugar, packed
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
- ½ t salt
- Non-stick cooking spray, as needed
- ¼ cup raisins
- 1 T sugar
- 1 t ground cinnamon



#### Instructions:

1. Have your child help mash the sweet potatoes and bananas in a medium bowl. Together, stir together sweet potato and banana. Talk about how the texture and color of the ingredients are changing.
2. Have your child add milk to the mixture, as you blend the mixture well.
3. Have her add brown sugar, egg yolks, and salt and continue to mix thoroughly. Talk about how the mixture changes as each ingredient is added and stirred together.
4. Spray a 1-quart casserole with non-stick cooking spray. Have her spoon the mixture into the casserole dish.
5. Have her combine raisins, sugar, and cinnamon in a small bowl and together sprinkle it over top of sweet potato mixture.
6. Bake in a preheated 325 degree oven for 40–45 minutes or until a knife inserted near center comes out clean.

## Community Resources

### Home Safety Council

<http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/>

The Home Safety Council is the leading source for home safety tips, checklists and information about home fire safety, falls prevention, poison prevention, water safety, child safety, disaster preparedness as well as many other home safety topics.

### Hawaii Parent Information Resource Center

<http://www.hawaiipirc.org/handbook/>

This handbook provides information about children’s safety and resources in different languages: English, Chuukese, Marshallese, and Spanish.



## Suggested Books

Recommended by Hawaii State Public Library [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

***Knees and Toes, a Rookie Toddler Book*** by Scholastic

***All Fall Down*** by Helen Oxenbury

This board book features babies at play. Babies are shown running, singing, bouncing on a bed, and falling down.

***Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed*** by Eileen Christelow

This familiar chant, charmingly illustrated, is sure to bring smiles to your youngster’s face as one-by-one the five little monkeys hurt themselves, bumping their heads from jumping on the bed. Don’t be surprised if your child asks you to read this book again and again—and recites the book in no time!

### Preschoolers

***Because Your Daddy Loves You*** by Andrew Clements

Your child will feel safe, knowing that no matter what situation he/she experiences, Daddy is there. As the book jacket summarizes, “All of the patient and caring things a daddy does because he loves his child are explored in this warm, reassuring, and humorous tribute to dads everywhere.”

***Firefighters A to Z*** by Chris Demarest

Every day, brave firefighters come to our rescue. From the minute the fire alarm rings, the day of a firefighter is filled with adventure – and danger. An alphabet book about a firefighter’s day.

Learning to Grow is a project of the Center on the Family at the University of Hawai‘i, College of Tropical Agriculture & Human Resources, with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Human Services. [www.learningtogrowhawaii.org](http://www.learningtogrowhawaii.org)