



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Keeping Your Young Child Safe

Keeping children safe—creating a safe environment and preventing or minimizing the risk of injuries—is a full time responsibility for adults. As children grow, they are constantly trying out new skills, experimenting with objects, and encountering different situations. Their curiosity and impulsivity drives their learning, and this can sometimes get them into situations which increase their chances of getting hurt. Knowing that young children are active explorers, it's up to you to keep them safe while encouraging their learning.

An important part of keeping children safe is to establish routines that reinforce safety and teach them how to keep themselves safe. The following are examples of how to teach safe habits beginning at an early age:

- ♥ **Create a safe environment in your home.** Get on your knees, and from your child's point of view, look around your home for potential hazards. Use safety devices, such as gates, to restrict your child's access to unsafe areas.
- ♥ **Make safety practices part of your daily routine.** Young children may not understand why you are, for example, putting them in a car seat. However, if this is an expectation every time you travel in the car, they will become familiar with this safety practice.
- ♥ **Use age-appropriate reminders to reinforce safety practices and rules.** A simple "no" is appropriate for telling your infant not to touch something. However, for toddlers you can provide verbal reminders and post pictures around the house as reminders. For preschoolers, you can talk about why you do certain things to keep safe, e.g., "Don't touch the stove because it's hot and you could burn yourself."

This newsletter will focus on safety issues that need to be addressed for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. In addition, age appropriate activities are also included.



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 by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Young infants spend a lot of time sleeping; therefore, it's important to follow habits that support safe sleep. Place infants on their back when putting them to sleep. Whether they sleep in a crib, on a mat, or on the floor, their sleeping area should be free of objects such as pillows, blankets, toys, crib bumpers or propping devices that could cause suffocation, strangulation, or other injuries.

As young infants grow and begin to move more (e.g., turn their bodies, scoot, crawl), it is important that their explorative learning is encouraged and supported by ensuring that the environment is properly child-proofed.

Here are some safety steps:

- ♥ **Identify potential dangers around your home.** Items such as dangling cords, small, “chokeable” objects, breakable objects, or sharp corners are potential hazards for your little one. Remove these items from her reach

and take the necessary steps to make the area safe for her to be in. Tip: Use an empty toilet paper roll as a gauge. If an item can fit inside it, it is a choking hazard.

- ♥ **Avoid placing heavy objects on shelves above cribs and/or sleeping areas.** Items such as DVD players or picture frames may topple down.



Activity for Infants: *Tummy Time with Contrasting Cards*

What You Need:

- Soft blanket or towel
- White colored card stock or construction paper
- Black marker
- Scissors (for adult use only)

What to Do:

1. Take a card stock paper and fold it into fourths by folding it in half and then folding it in half once more. Cut along the lines to create four cards.
2. Using the black marker, draw simple shapes or thick lines to create a design. Create a different design on each card. Make the designs simple but large enough to fill the whole card.
3. Place your baby on a soft blanket or towel for tummy time and place the card on the floor near her line of vision. Watch her gaze at the card, talk about the designs, and change the cards as she starts to lose interest.
4. For a different experience, add a rolled up towel under your infant's torso so she is inclined. Be sure your baby's neck muscles are strong enough to do this activity. Place the cards against the wall and draw her interest by encouraging her to gaze at each card.



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

Toddlers

Toddlers are just as curious at this age, wanting to touch, taste, and smell just about anything. This trait, combined with their increased mobility, allows them to make many new discoveries, but also increases their risk for accidents or injuries. Children at this age are still developing coordination, and they don't seem to fully understand yet, what "danger" or "safety" means. Therefore, it is important that you continuously check for hazards and safety-proof your home.

Here are some safety steps:

- ♥ **Secure and fasten potentially dangerous furniture.** Falling shelves and bookcases as well as children's attraction to items on top of furniture pose distinct hazards to young children. Take steps to secure bookcases to the wall and fasten large, heavy objects directly to the surface.
- ♥ **Practice safe habits.** Look at one room in your home, for example your kitchen, and identify



what you can do to practice safety. Kitchen safety practices include: keeping hot pan handles turned to the back of the stove, and out of reach to prevent burns and scalding; removing front-facing oven knobs when not in use; and using safety latches on lower cupboards—especially those with breakable dishes or toxic cleaning products in them.

Activity for Toddlers: *Red Light, Green Light, and Yellow Light Too!*

Adapted from: <http://www.childfun.com/themes/misc/safety/>

What You Need:

Red, green, and yellow items (one of each color)

What to Do:

1. Talk to your child about what traffic lights are and what each of the colors mean.
2. Say that you will be playing a game that relates to the traffic lights. Tell her when she sees you holding the red item and hears you say, "red light," that means freeze, stop, or don't move your body.
3. When she sees you holding the green item and hears you say, "green light," that means walk or go. Vary the activity by having her skip, hop, or move in slow motion, when seeing the green item.
4. Add the yellow item when you see she has an understanding that "red" means "stop" and "green" means "go." Explain to her what the yellow item means.
5. Take turns holding up the different items and being the one to move their body according to the color.

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Preschoolers

Preschoolers are growing in their ability to understand, repeat, and follow safety practices. Use moments throughout the day to teach your child safety practices and the reasons for them. For example, discuss outdoor safety practices such



as why she shouldn't play near the street or by parked cars, or why she shouldn't leave the house unsupervised. At crosswalks, talk about street signs, the crosswalks, and traffic signals that show when it's safe to cross. Remember to hold her hand when crossing the street.

Here are some safety steps:

- ♥ **Talk about community helpers such as police officers and how they help keep people safe and can help in an emergency or if someone is lost.** Talk about what your child can say to a police officer or to another person if she needs help. Role play different situations with your child, and encourage her to find safe solutions.
- ♥ **Teach your child how to call 911 in an emergency.** Teach her to be able to say her first and last name and her home address (at least the street name). This information may come in handy during emergency situations.

Activity for Preschoolers: *Junior Fire Fighter*

What You Need:

Pencil

Graph paper or Fire Escape Plan (see above)

What to Do:

1. With your child, draw a floor plan of your home. Indicate where each room is and include the doors and windows for each room.
2. Talk about fire safety and if there is an emergency how you would use doors and windows to leave each room.
3. Together, go through your home and ask your "junior fire fighter" to identify all the exits. Have her count each room's exit; there should be two in each room.
4. On your floor plan, have her to mark it on her map with a big red "X."
5. Talk about a meeting place outside, where everyone will meet if there is an emergency. It should be in the front of your home.
6. Practice each month by holding a family fire drill, identifying the best exit to use and meeting at the meeting place.

(See page 5 for more 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

- ♥ Learn through her senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching
- ♥ Use her bodies with intention

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop a closer bond with you
- ♥ Build trust in you and other important people
- ♥ Build confidence in themselves

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Connect words and sounds they hear with what she experiences
- ♥ Build verbal skills and vocabulary

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Begin to examine characteristics of objects
- ♥ Develop her creativity and imagination

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you make 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. Remember to follow food safety guidelines when working in the kitchen: wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meats from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate food promptly.

Sweet Pea Lasagna

Adapted from: <http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/sweet-pea-lasagna-recipe>

Ingredients:

- 10 ounce package frozen peas, thawed and drained
- 16 ounce container ricotta cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 16 ounce jar marinara sauce
- 9 ounce package no boil lasagna noodles
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded mozzarella
- 8 inch square baking dish

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. In a medium bowl, have your child combine the ricotta cheese, peas, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Talk about how each ingredient changes as it gets mixed together.
3. Scoop half the marinara sauce into an 8- inch square pan. Have your child put 4 sheets of lasagna noodles over the sauce.
4. Together, spread half the ricotta mixture over the noodles and top with a 2 sheets of lasagna noodles. Then, spread the remaining ricotta mixture onto the noodles. Again, top with 4 sheets of lasagna, then the remaining marinara.
5. Sprinkle with mozzarella on top. Cover the pan with foil and bake until the noodles are tender, 45 to 50 minutes.
6. Ask your child what she thinks the lasagna will look and taste like. Enjoy together!



Community Resources

KidsHealth

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/household-checklist.html>

This website provides household safety checklist for: bathrooms, laundry, and garage areas, electrical safety, walls and floors, backyard and pool areas, bedrooms, and kitchen.

Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition/Safe Kids Hawaii

<http://www.kipchawaii.org>

A website designed to prevent and reduce injury to Hawaii's keiki. Find safety information and resources for children of all ages.



Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Look, Look! by Peter Linenethal

This board book has high contrasting black and white illustrations for your infant to look at and learn (e.g., a car racing, cat stretching, flower blooming). On each page there are a few words in red to describe the scene.

Good Night Touch and Feel by Melanie Mitchell

This book shows cuddly animals during the day and what happens to them when it's time to go to bed after a busy day. Your child will be able to use their senses to explore this book.

Red Light, Green Light by Antastasia Suen

This book is filled with rhyming words and bright illustrations. Go on an adventure as one little boy uses his imagination and creates a world of make believe with many different modes of transportation including planes, trains, and automobiles. It teaches children how vehicles stop and go.

Big Frank's Fire Truck by Linda McGuire

Go on a ride with Big Frank and his crew as they battle a brush fire, go to an elementary school, and inspect a shop. This book is illustrated in full color.



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