

Home Hazards and Reducing Risk



A hazard is something with the potential to cause harm – in other words, a danger. Homes, schools and workplaces are filled with hazards – some minor (that might cause a light cut or bruise) and some major (that might result in serious injury, permanent disability or even death).

When we think of the things that can seriously injure or kill us, we usually think of weapons like guns and bombs. But common items that we use daily around the home, like ladders, cookers, knives, televisions and even deodorant sprays, can harm or kill us or members of our family. Careless or inappropriate use can be particularly dangerous with younger brothers or sisters around.

Keeping safe is all about:

- understanding what hazards are (e.g. knowing that dangers aren't always obvious)
- taking responsibility for our own safety (e.g. recognising that accidents don't 'just happen'; they're the result of our actions and one mistake could cost us our life)
- making responsible choices (e.g. seeking the safest way of doing things and avoiding behaviours that endanger us or the safety of others)
- being alert to possible danger and analysing the situation (e.g. being careful of distractions like music or mobile phone conversations, which might take our attention away from spotting a hazard)
- thinking ahead (e.g. taking steps to reduce the risk – from keeping floors clear of our things, to fitting smoke alarms on each level of our homes)
- knowing where and how to get help (e.g. knowing the role of the emergency services and how to dial 999).

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Home Hazards and Reducing Risk (cont'd)

Types of hazards

These are some of the most common and most dangerous hazards found in the home (as well as in schools and workplaces). You can read more about each of these hazards and how to avoid them, as well as the types of injuries they cause and basic first aid, in the other fact sheets. But remember – the best treatment is prevention!

Hazard	Potential risks (besides death)	Examples
Sharp objects	Cuts; punctures; stab wounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● razors left out in the bathroom ● sharp scissors left loose in a drawer ● broken glass on floor
Electrical appliances	Electric shock; starting a fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● hair straighteners left switched on, on the bed ● using light switches with wet hands ● computers with damaged cables
Fire and flames	Burns; suffocating from smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● candles left unattended ● clothing left on electric heater ● laptops left switched on overnight
Heat	Burns; scalds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● chip fryers over-filled and knocked over ● hot water in the bath ● hot iron left unattended
Falls	Bruises; broken bones; damaged muscles; permanent disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● falling down the stairs ● falling from a ladder ● heavy items falling on you from a high shelf
Tripping or slipping	Bruises; broken bones; damaged muscles; permanent disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● tripping over electric cables ● slipping on wet bathroom floors ● tripping over mess left on the floor
Poisons	Chemical burns; blindness; damage to stomach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cleaning products on the skin ● food poisoning from out-of-date, uncooked or dirty food ● alcohol/ drug/ glue poisoning