



Spring Cleaning Safety

Millions of Americans are gearing up for another season of spring cleaning, yet many may not realize that some chores around the house can increase the risk of injury.

According to the Home Safety Council, unintentional home-related injuries cause 21 million medical visits and nearly 20,000 deaths on average, each year -- many resulting from the kinds of activities conducted while spring cleaning.

"Whether it's climbing, cleaning, or carrying heavy loads, household chores can be risky," says Meri-K Appy, Home Safety Council president. "Learning about the risks and taking the time to avoid them are smart ways to kick off this annual ritual."

In an effort to help families avoid the added risks associated with spring cleaning, HSC is providing simple safety tips to keep in mind when cleaning. HSC also suggests that families use the opportunity to evaluate the safety of their homes and find and fix home dangers before an injury occurs.

Spring Cleaning the Safer Way

A good spring cleaning often means climbing, lifting heavy objects and using strong cleaning solutions -- all potential safety hazards. The Home Safety Council urges families to keep the following safe practices top of mind while cleaning:

- When cleaning out closets or re-organizing, keep stairs, steps, landings and all floors clear.
- Carry loads you can see over, and keep one hand free to hold banisters and railings.
- Remember to reduce clutter and safely tuck telephone and electrical cords away from walkways. In homes with children, make sure toys and other items are always safely put away when not in use.
- If you need to climb, use a stepladder or ladder. When using a ladder, stand at or below the highest safe standing level. For a stepladder, the safe standing level is the second rung from the top, and for an extension ladder, it's the fourth rung from the top. Before using, make sure the rungs are dry.
- Follow safety recommendations when using harsh products, such as wearing gloves and masks. Do not mix products together because the contents could react, causing dangerous results.
- Never use gasoline as a cleaning solvent and never use or store gasoline in your home, even in tiny quantities. Because its vapors can readily ignite, it is too dangerous to use gasoline for any purpose other than as a motor fuel.



- When cleaning out cabinets, separate dangerous products and medications and lock them up and out of the reach of young children.
- Five-gallon buckets are often used while cleaning and present a serious drowning danger to young children. Never leave a bucket or any standing water unattended and store buckets empty and upside-down.

Home Safety Improvements Everyone Can Make

Spring cleaning provides a perfect opportunity to evaluate the safety of your home, identify hazards and fix them before an unintentional injury occurs. The Home Safety Council provides the following list of safety improvements to help you make a clean sweep of your home while spring cleaning:

- Install grab bars and non-slip decals in all bathtubs and showers.
- Make sure all porches, hallways and stairwells are well lit. Use the maximum safe wattage in light fixtures.
- Place nightlights in guestrooms, bathrooms and walkways to help light the way during night-time hours.
- Those living with young children in the home should install window guards to keep children from climbing up and falling out of open upper windows. Make sure window guards also have a quick release mechanism so an adult can open the window easily in case of a fire.
- Keep outdoor walkways and porches clean and in good repair. All steps should have a handrail. Repair broken or chipped bricks, cracks in cement and other hazards that could cause a fall.
- Make sure medications, caustic cleaning products (example: drain openers, toilet and oven cleaners, rust removers, etc.), automotive fluids (example: windshield washing solution and antifreeze), pesticides, fertilizer and other household chemicals are in their original containers and in a locked cabinet.
- Make sure all dangerous products have child-resistant caps, including cleaning products and chemicals.
- As medicines age, the chemicals inside them can change.
- Put the poison control center number (1-800-222-1222) near every phone in the home and make sure guests are aware of the number. Call the poison center immediately in case of a possible poisoning. From anywhere in the country, a call to 1-800-222-1222 puts you in touch with local poison center experts.
- Check to be sure flammable and combustible liquids are stored outside in a locking shed or the garage. Gasoline must never be stored or used in your home, even in small quantities.
- Store matches, lighters and candles in a locked cabinet, out of children's reach.
- Have you replaced your smoke alarms' batteries this year? If not, insert new batteries in every smoke alarm.



- If you have a fire extinguisher, learn how to use it and install it properly; children should not be permitted to handle a fire extinguisher.
- Use safety covers in electrical outlets and anti-scald devices in faucets in homes with young children.
- Do you know the temperature of your hot water? Temperatures more than 120 degrees F. can burn a child's skin in seconds. Test your hot water at the faucet and have the water heater temperature adjusted to no higher than 120 degrees F. Some models can be adjusted by the homeowner. Contact your utility company with questions.
- Practice pool safety. If your house has a backyard pool, make sure that the pool is protected with four-sided isolation fencing (five-foot high fencing on all four sides of the pool area -- with no access directly from your house), and with a self-latching gate. Never prop open the gate.