

Fire Safety: Protecting Your Family from a Home Fire

A home can become engulfed in flames in minutes. Here's what to know to help keep your family safe.

Smoke alarms save lives

One of the most important steps you can take to protect your family against fire is to install smoke alarms and keep them in good working order. You can buy smoke alarms at most home and hardware stores, and they often cost \$10 or less. Check with your fire department to see if they give out and install free smoke alarms.



- **Install** smoke alarms outside every bedroom or any area where someone sleeps. Also install them in furnace areas. Be sure there is at least 1 alarm on every level of your home, including the basement, or at each end of a mobile home.
- **Place** smoke alarms away from the kitchen and bathroom. False alarms can occur while cooking or even showering.
- **Test** smoke alarms every month by pushing the test button. It is best to use smoke alarms that have long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year, such as when you change your clocks in the fall.
- **Replace** smoke alarms every 10 years.
- **Never** paint a smoke alarm.
- **Clean** (dust or vacuum) smoke alarms once a month.
- **Use** smoke alarms equipped with a flashing light and an alarm in homes with children or adults who are hard of hearing or deaf.

Fire drills—be prepared!

Even young children (3 and older) can begin to learn what to do in case of a fire.

- **Install at least 1 smoke alarm** on every level of your home.
- **Have an escape plan** and practice it with your family. This will help you and your family reach safety when it counts. When a fire occurs, there will be no time for planning an escape.
- **Draw a floor plan** of your home. Discuss with your family 2 ways to exit every room. Make sure everyone knows how to get out and that doors and windows can be easily opened to permit escape. If you live in an apartment building, never use an elevator during a fire. Use the stairs!
- **Agree on a meeting place.** Choose a spot outside your home near a tree, street corner, or fence where everyone can meet after escaping. Teach your children that the sound of a smoke alarm means to go outside right away to the chosen place.

- **Know how to call the fire department.** The fire department should be called from outside using a portable phone or from a neighbor's home. Whether the number is 911 or a regular phone number, everyone in the family should know it by heart. Make sure your children know your home address, too. Teach your children that firefighters are friends and never to hide from them.
- **Practice, practice, practice.** Practice your exit drill at least twice a year. Remember that fire drills are not a race. Get out quickly, but calmly and carefully. Try practicing realistic situations. Pretend that some exits or doorways are blocked or that the lights are out. The more prepared your family is, the better your chances of surviving a fire.

***Note:** Parents of very young children or children with special needs should have a safety plan that fits their child's needs and abilities. For example, a child who is hard of hearing or deaf may need a smoke alarm with a flashing strobe-light feature. Parents with children younger than 5 years must plan on an adult rescuing them in the case of a house fire; they are too young to be able to reliably rescue themselves.*

Know what to do in a fire

- **Test any closed doors** with the back of your hand for heat. Do not open the door if you feel heat or see smoke. Close all doors as you leave each room to keep the fire from spreading.
- **Crawl low under smoke.** Choose the safest exit. If you must escape through a smoky area, remember that cleaner air is always near the floor. Teach your child to crawl on her hands and knees, keeping her head less than 2 feet above the floor, as she makes her way to the nearest exit.
- **Don't stop. Don't go back.** In case of fire, do not try to rescue pets or possessions. Once you are out, do not go back in for any reason. Firefighters have the best chance of rescuing people who are trapped. Let firefighters know right away if anyone is missing.
- **If you get trapped by smoke or flames,** close all doors. Stuff towels or clothing under the doors to keep out smoke. Cover your nose and mouth with a damp cloth to protect your lungs. If there is no phone in the room, wait at a window and signal for help with a light-colored cloth or flashlight.
- **Stop, drop and roll!** Cool and call. Make sure your child knows what to do if his clothes catch fire.
 - *Stop!* - Do not run.
 - *Drop!* - Drop to the ground right where you are.
 - *Roll!* - Roll over and over to put out the flames. Cover your face with your hands.
 - *Cool!* - Cool the burned area with water.
 - *Call!* - Call for help.

For your sitters

When you are away from home and someone else cares for your children, make sure that your children and the babysitter (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Babysitting-Reminders.aspx>) will be just as safe as when you are there.

- Let your sitter know about your family's escape plan.
- Remind sitters never to leave the children alone.
- Remind sitters that you do not allow smoking in or around your home.

Leave emergency information near the phone. Include the local fire department phone number, your full home s and phone number, and a neighbor's name and phone number.

More information

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- [Fire Safety Planning \(/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Fire-Safety-Planning-Saves-Lives.aspx\)](/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Fire-Safety-Planning-Saves-Lives.aspx)
- [Burn Treatment & Prevention \(/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Treating-and-Preventing-Burns.aspx\)](/English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Treating-and-Preventing-Burns.aspx)

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