

Is your child safe from drowning in your house? Are you sure? When you're out of the heat and away from pools and beaches, you might think you can relax about drowning dangers. Think again.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, about 115 young children a year drown in common products in and around the home. "Most kids love the water and are naturally drawn to it, yet they have no understanding of its potential hazards," says Dorothy Drago, child safety expert and author of the book *From Crib to Kindergarten: The Essential Child Safety Guide* (John Hopkins Press, 2007). Here are the top four commonly overlooked hazards and what you can do to protect your child.

Find the Hidden Drowning Hazards in Your Home



By Kyla Steinkraus

BATHTUBS

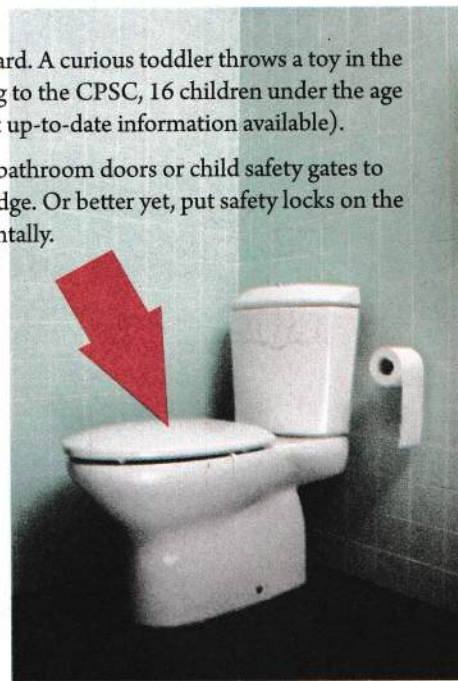
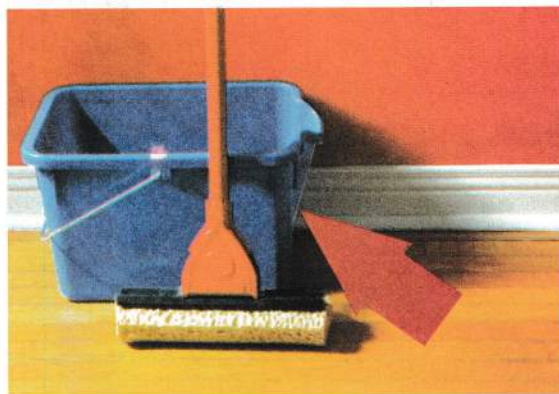
The Risk: Most parents know they should never leave a child alone in the bathtub, yet more children continue to drown in bathtubs than anywhere else in the home. Seventy-two children under the age of 5 drowned in bathtubs in 2001, with infants under the age of 1 comprising more than half of that number.

What You Can Do: Never leave a child in a bathtub, not even with an older sibling watching. Don't leave even to grab a towel from the next room. "In all bathtub drownings, the caregiver left the child unattended for only a brief period," Drago says. "Perhaps there is a perception that a bathtub with just a little water is not a hazard, or that a child left in a bath seat is safe. Neither of these is true." Bath seat suction pads can become unstuck, the seat can topple over, or toddlers can wiggle out. About eight children drown in bath seats every year.

TOILETS

The Risk: Toilets are often overlooked as a drowning hazard. A curious toddler throws a toy in the toilet and topples in when he tries to retrieve it. According to the CPSC, 16 children under the age of 5 drowned in toilets between 1996 and 1999 (the most up-to-date information available).

What You Can Do: Always use child safety latches on bathroom doors or child safety gates to keep your child from gaining access without your knowledge. Or better yet, put safety locks on the toilet itself, since bathroom doors can be left open accidentally.



BUCKETS

The Risk: The phone rings while you're mopping the kitchen floor. But leaving the room for only a few moments to answer it could be deadly for your child. Over a three-year period, the CPSC received 58 reports of young children drowning in buckets. Children try to climb in, end up falling in head first, and are too top-heavy to scramble out. Of all the buckets, a 5-gallon bucket presents the greatest hazard to toddlers because of its stability and tall sides.

What You Can Do: Never leave buckets or containers containing liquid unattended. Always empty buckets as soon as you've finished using them. Turn buckets stored outside upside down to keep them from collecting rainwater, recommends Debra Holtzman, M.A., safety expert and author of *The Safe Baby: A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Home Safety* (Sentient, 2004).

OTHER CONTAINERS

The Risk: "A child can drown in as little as 1 inch of water," Holtzman says. "Standing water anywhere poses a drowning hazard." Children have drowned in fish tanks, birdbaths, ice chests filled with melting ice, sinks, washing machines and pet water bowls.

What You Can Do: Keep containers such as pet bowls and fish tanks in a separate room protected by safety gates, locks or doorknob covers.

"Keep your child in your sight and even within arm's reach any time you both are around water," advises Drago. It's not



enough to simply be present. Constant vigilance and active supervision are necessary to keep your child safe.

"Don't multitask while supervising: no reading, napping, or talking on the phone," Holtzman says. She recommends all parents take an infant/child CPR and first aid course.

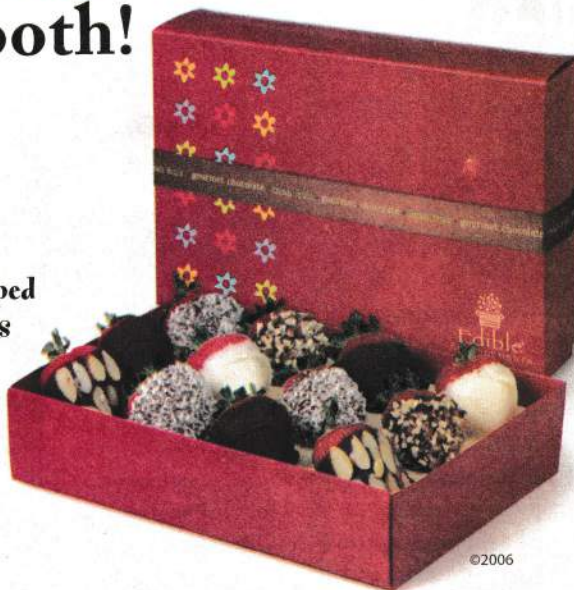
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<http://birmingham.redcross.org>

American Heart Association

Birmingham Division
1449 Medical Park Dr.
Birmingham, AL 35213
205-510-1500
www.americanheart.org
Hint: The website lets you search for local classes by zip code.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission Safety Alert

www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/drown.html

Safe Kids USA

[www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/
Drowning_facts.pdf](http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/Drowning_facts.pdf)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/drown.htm