

accidents don't have to happen

# Bringing Safety Home

- Why is home safety important?
- Top Tips
- How we can help



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# Why home safety is important to everyone:

## 2. The 24/7 approach

RoSPA's Public Health Adviser, Sheila Merrill, has 30 years experience in creating, delivering and promoting home safety campaigns and training.

Home safety affects everyone as your home is the place where an accident is most likely to happen.

That's why at RoSPA, we believe in a 24/7 approach to home safety – that everything you learn at work about keeping safe can also be put into practice when you are relaxing with your family and friends.

The figures are stark. Every year in the UK, more than 5,000 people die in accidents in the home and 2.7 million people end up at A&E needing treatment.

Some of the common and devastating accidents to families include falls, burns, scalds, carbon monoxide poisoning and poisonings by medicine or cleaning products that have not been locked away.

Accidents take their toll on everyone and even if you, your partner or children have not been directly affected, you may have taken time off work to visit a relative or parent in hospital who has.

So, as you read this e-book, remember that health and safety doesn't just apply to work, it's a valuable life-saving tool for the home as well.

# Why home safety is important to everyone:

## 2. Who is most at risk?

- Accidents are the principal cause of death for people up to the age of 39 in the UK.
- By far, the most at risk to an accident at home are children under the age of five and the over-65s.
- For older people, frailty, particularly on their feet, plays a part, while children's inquisitive nature and ignorance to the dangers around them make them a prime target for an accident.
- For both of these age groups, you may be surprised to find out that falls are the most common accident – accounting for 55 per cent of accidental injuries.
- Every year more than 4,200 children are involved in falls on the stairs and 4,000 children under the age of 15 are injured falling from windows.

# Why home safety is important to everyone:

## 3. Home accidents - stats

- Around 60 children and young people die, 450,000 attend A&E and 40,000 are admitted to hospital as an emergency as a result of an accident in and around the home
- Approximately 1,500 people aged over 75 die as the result of a fall
- There are nearly 67,000 accidental fires in Great Britain – around 22,000 are caused by cooking appliances, 13,000 by faulty appliances and leads, and 4,000 by smoking-related materials
- Carbon monoxide poisoning leads to around 50 accidental deaths, 200 non-fatal poisonings that require hospital treatment and 4,000 A&E visits in England and Wales
- Around 25,000 under-fives attend A&E departments after being accidentally poisoned from items including medication and household cleaning products

# Preventing Accidents:

## 1. General home safety

- Preventing accidents in the home means looking closely at things you or your family do day in and out. Often, people's behaviour at home is far different from the way they would act at work and that can leave them and their loved ones at risk of an unnecessary injury. In fact, there are a lot of similarities between preventing accidents at work and in the home.
- As with workplaces, falls are the main cause of accident in the home. Simple things can make the difference. Think about clearing staircases of clutter or adding a safety gate if you have a child. Hand rails on stairs and also garden paths or outside steps can help to reduce the risk of a fall to those unsteady on their feet
- It's not just older people and toddlers who fall either. If you are using a ladder in the garden or to decorate, do what you would do at work and check its condition before you use it and if it is at a safe angle – remember the 1 in 4 rule

There's plenty more home safety advice on the [RoSPA website](#)

- *Accidental fires are a real risk too with nearly 67,000 callouts every year. Fitting a smoke alarm is the most important thing you can do to alert your family to flames*
- *Hot water can burn like fire too. Children and elderly people are particularly vulnerable to scalds, so always run cold water into the bath first before adding hot water to warm it up. When it comes to bathing children, carefully test the water temperature and never leave them alone in the bath unattended.*
- *TMVs (Thermostat Mixing Valves) limit the temperature of water to 48C to remove the potential for the most serious scald injuries. TMVs must now be included in all new build homes, but can be fitted in older properties*
- *If you have a working fireplace and have children or older people in the home, invest in a fireguard to protect them from falling into or getting too close to the flames.*

# Preventing Accidents:

## 2. Child Safety

There is no way of ever making a home completely safe but there are simple ways to prevent a child getting injured.

It helps to get down on your knees on the floor and take a look around you from a child's eyes. Suddenly, you will see things like the sharp edges on tables, or hot drinks, from a whole new perspective.

The most severe injuries to children are often due to burns and scalds, falling down stairs or from windows, and suffocation or choking on small items or by getting caught up in objects, like a blind cord.

While toddlers are naturally inquisitive and often put items they find straight in their mouth, children aged over three are stronger and prone to copying, so parents should keep everyday items like matches, lighters, sharp kitchen implements and tools out of sight and reach.

Once you have identified hazards, you can then do something about reducing or removing the risk – but remember the most important safety guard for your children is supervision as accidents often happen when an adult has left the room.

### Food for thought

- Adding safety equipment, like safety gates on the stairs, a fireguard, window restrictors and blind cord cleats, at different stages of a child's life can make quick but huge differences
- Don't leave dangerous items like batteries, household cleaning products or medication lying around. Keep these out of the sight and reach of children, ideally in lockable cupboards
- Hot drinks close to the edge of a table or kitchen worktop are a real danger. A hot drink can scald a small child up to 15 minutes after it is made

# Preventing accidents:

## 3. Older people

With an ageing population and an emphasis on enabling older people to live as independently as possible, it is clear that older people's safety at home is an issue that cannot be ignored.

If you have elderly relatives or neighbours, it is important to realise that their vulnerability means that a simple fall can have serious consequences - particularly to those aged over 75. Around 1,500 people aged over 75 die each year as the result of a fall. Think about how you'd feel if that was your parent, grandparent or your favourite aunt or uncle .

### Top Tips

- Replace worn rugs (especially on the stairs) and maintain slippery floors or paths and uneven surfaces in and around the home.
- Don't have trailing flexes on the floor or items on the stairs that can be tripped over.
- Keep landings, stairs and hallways well lit, even at night for trips to the toilet
- Make sure banisters are sturdy and consider fitting easy-grip handrails that give more stability.



# Did you know:

## 1. Be gas safe

Carbon monoxide, also known as CO, is a silent deadly gas that is particularly dangerous because you **can't see it, taste it or smell it** but it can kill quickly and with no warning.

There are approximately 50 accidental deaths, 200 non-fatal poisonings that require hospital admission and 4,000 visits to Emergency Departments (ED) that result from CO poisoning every year in England and Wales, according to the Department of Health.

Fitting a carbon monoxide alarm in your home (and also in a caravan or holiday property when you are on vacation) can make the difference between life and death.

Getting regular checks on boilers, gas cookers and other fossil-fuel appliances (using wood, coal and oil) is also a must to ensure they are not faulty and emit toxic fumes. CO fumes can build up to dangerous levels if a fuel-burning appliance is incorrectly fitted, badly repaired or poorly maintained, or if flues, chimneys or vents are blocked.

Signing up for annual alerts with a gas engineer can help to keep on top of this life-saving check.

It helps to make yourself aware of the symptoms of CO, shown here:



# Did you know?

## 2. Everyday objects

It's often the small objects that you take for granted that you need to be most aware of – items like electronic cigarettes, hair straighteners, nappy sacks and small batteries.

Product safety is close to RoSPA's heart and we keep ahead of emerging issues. Here are some of those:

**Blind Cords** - Looped cords, such as blind cords and chains, can pose a strangulation risk to small children. Typically, we hear about one or two children dying after becoming tangled in blind cords in the UK each year and there are many more near misses.

### Top tips

- Cords should be kept out of the reach of children
- Install blinds that do not have a cord, particularly in a child's bedroom
- Do not place a child's cot, bed, playpen or highchair near a window
- Pull cords on curtains and blinds should be kept short and kept out of reach
- Tie up the cords or use a cleat, cord tidy or clip.

**Nappy sacks** - Plastic bags used to dispose of dirty nappies – have caused the death of at least 14 babies in England and Wales. Babies have suffocated or choked on the items, often after putting them in their mouths.

### Top tip

Never place a nappy sack in a baby's cot or pram, keep them and other plastic bags out of the reach of babies and young children, and buy them on a roll.

# Did you know?

## 2. Everyday Objects

**Electronic cigarettes** – There is growing concern over the potential poisoning risk to children as e-cigarettes contain nicotine and are often bright colours that attract children. RoSPA has heard of children being poisoned after ingesting the contents of an e-cigarette so avoid leaving these items lying around your home or unattended. Remember, children will watch and copy.

**Hair straighteners** - Hair straighteners can cause horrific burn injuries. They reach temperatures in excess of 200 degrees – hot enough to fry an egg – and can take as long as 40 minutes to cool down.

Remember to switch hair straighteners off and unplug them straight away, before sliding them into a heat resistant bag.

Store them out of the sight and reach of children.

**Button cell batteries** - RoSPA has been made aware of the dangers of children swallowing button cell batteries that can be found in toys, remote controls, calculators and small electronic devices. Lithium batteries in particular react with saliva so that they leak acid within as little as an hour. If a child swallows a battery it can cause severe trauma, such as burning a hole in their throat or stomach or further damage to other internal organs

**Household cleaning products** - exploring is part of growing up but young children have little concept of potential dangers. They are inquisitive and will often put things in their mouth to further explore their texture and taste. Small children may mistake liquid capsule style dishwasher and washing machine detergents for toys or sweets.

Keep household cleaning products out of sight and reach of children, preferably in a locked cupboard and in their original containers. Replace lids and put all products away immediately after use

# Did you know?

## 3. Hot hot hot

Fires can start suddenly and spread extremely quickly. In the time it takes for a commercial break in the middle of Coronation Street, a spark from a cigarette or faulty charger could have escalated into a bedroom being totally consumed by flames.

First and foremost, make sure your family has made an escape route and everyone knows what to do if the worst happens. When smoke is filling your home in the middle of the night - that is not the time you want to be coming up with an escape plan.

Importantly, if there is a fire, remember to Get **out**, Stay **out** and call the fire brigade **out!** Don't try tackling flames yourself, leave it to the professionals.

Cooking appliances cause the largest number of accidental house fires in the UK, however the most deaths are due to smoking in the home, often in bed at night. It's best to avoid smoking in bed and always make sure that cigarettes are extinguished and ash trays emptied before retiring to bed.

### Now check out our top 5 fire safety tips...

- Fit approved smoke alarm on each floor, preferably one that is mains operated or one has a 10-year battery life
- Avoid smoking in bed - smoking materials are to blame for the most UK accidental house fires that result in a death
- Never leave candles unattended and make sure you have snuffed them out before going to bed. Keep them away from curtains and furniture and don't place them on a television or bath, which can catch fire easily
- Keep all fires and heaters well guarded, especially open fires if you have children.
- In the kitchen, don't leave cooking unattended and use a thermostatically-controlled electric deep fat fryer. Always use rear hot plates first and turn the panhandles away from the front of the cooker.

# What RoSPA is doing:

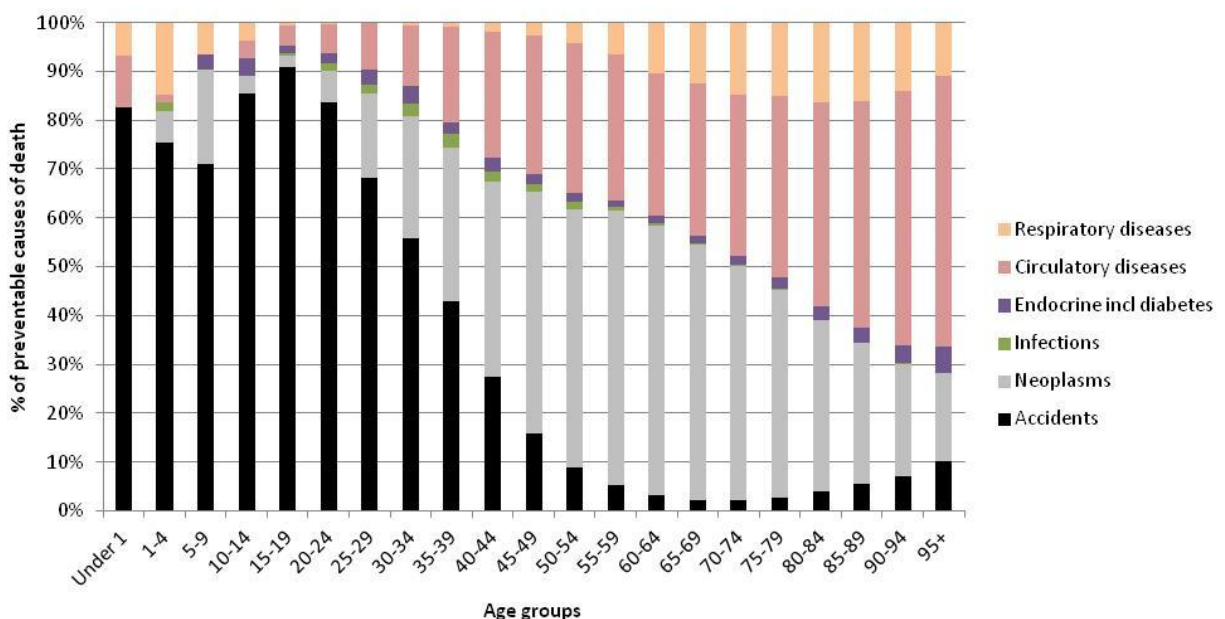
## 1. The Big Book of Accident Prevention

RoSPA is campaigning to make accident prevention a cornerstone of public health policy and has created [The Big Book of Accident Prevention](#) to highlight the impact that effective accidental injury prevention strategies and schemes can have on the health of the population.

Accidents are untimely, often violent, events that can devastate families and whole communities, but prevention of accidental injury and death is often overlooked in public health circles because of its seeming complexity and its interdependence with other issues such as alcohol or illness.

RoSPA has pioneered research into *Preventable causes of death* (see graph below) – this shows that accidents are the number one cause of preventable deaths amongst people aged between 0-39.

**Preventable causes of death as a % of total preventable causes of death by age group, England & Wales 2012 (ONS data)**



# What RoSPA is doing:

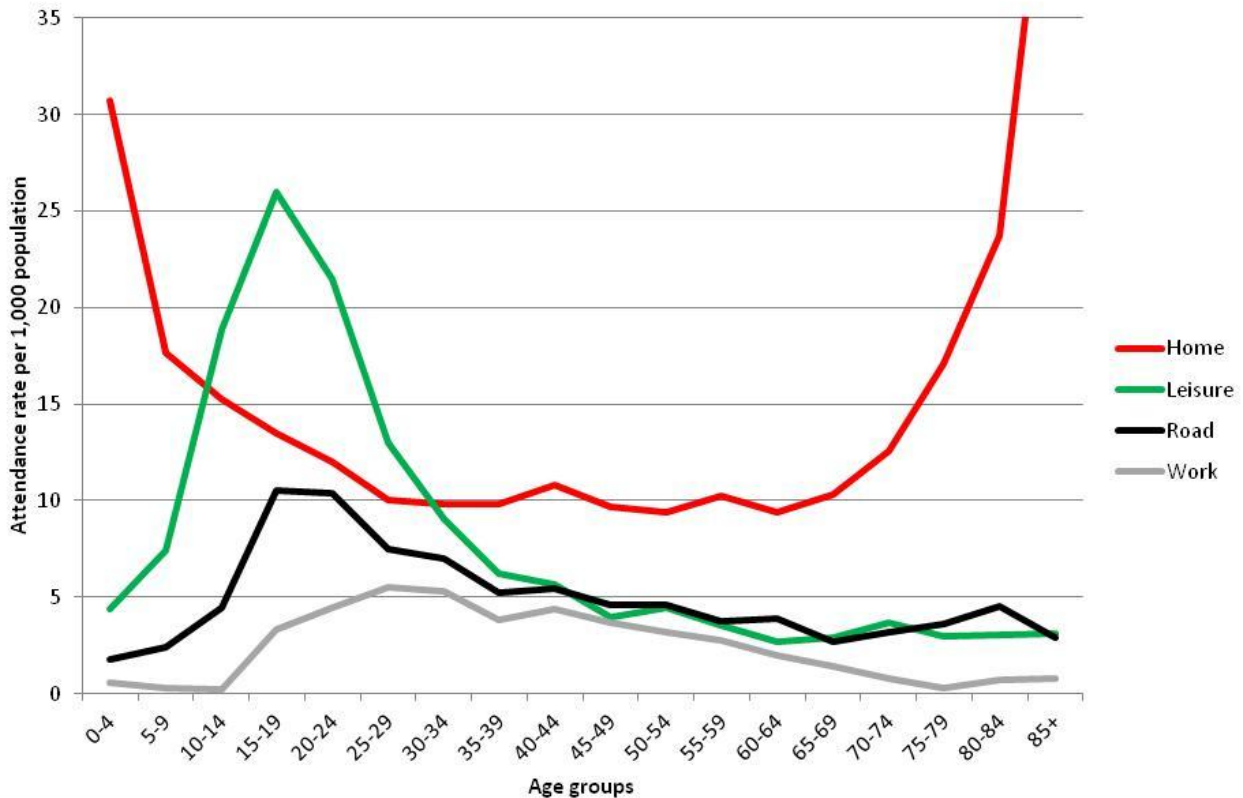
## 2. New Oxford data

RoSPA's latest collaboration with Oxford University Hospital Trust's emergency departments highlights the main causes of injury and breaks this information down by age, gender, activity and location in order to help health officials prioritise who and where accident prevention schemes should be targeting.

The research found that the majority of casualties in the ED were due to home injuries.

This kind of data is invaluable in pointing out what the key reasons are behind unnecessary deaths and severe injuries, but they have not been collected nationally since 2002.

Unintentional injury rates from Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust Emergency Departments ('A&E') John Radcliffe and Horton General, 1st Jan 2012 to 31st Dec 2012



# What is RoSPA doing:

## 3. Training

RoSPA offers one-day City & Guilds approved specialist home safety training courses across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland that can be tailored for delegates, ranging from local authority officers or emergency service staff working with families to foster carers, third sector employees or health and safety managers.

We offer courses in:

[An Introduction to Home Safety](#)

[Child Safety in the Home](#)

[Older People Safety in the Home](#)

[Choosing and Using Home Safety Equipment](#)

Interested in finding out more?

Call: 0121 248 2107

Email: [publichealth@rospa.com](mailto:publichealth@rospa.com)

Website: [www.rospa.com/training/homesafety/](http://www.rospa.com/training/homesafety/)

# About RoSPA

RoSPA (The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) is a registered charity and one of the UK's leading safety organisations. Through our [training](#), [consultancy](#), [awards](#) and [membership services](#), we work with organisations within the UK and overseas.

## Why choose RoSPA training?

RoSPA offers one of the widest ranges of health and safety training courses and in-company safety training in the UK, from operative level right up to director and board level.

We also lead the way in practical health and safety consultancy and audits. Tailored services provide a service that suits and ensures you're fully compliant and - above all - safe.

## Which home safety courses does RoSPA offer?

[Home Safety Courses](#)

[Water and Leisure Safety Courses](#)

[Play Safety Courses](#)

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