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# Reducing hazards - an important issue for young children

## What is a Hazard?

A hazard is an agent which has the potential to cause harm to a vulnerable target. In this case, the “vulnerable target” is the children in the early years setting.

Reducing hazards is an important issue because young children explore their world with all their senses, including touching and mouthing anything within their reach. For this reason, it is very important to remove any potential hazards within their reach.

To do this, you must think from the child’s perspective. It can also be useful to get down a child’s level and crawl around their space to notice potential hazards. These are things that could be considered when deciding if something could be a hazard to a child in an early years setting.

Are there any areas that are accessible to the children that are not visible to the caregiver from any point in the space? If so, rearrange furniture or use mirrors to make these areas visible.

Are all unused electrical outlets covered? These pose an electrocution hazard and must be covered.

Are there any cords accessible to children? These can be both an electrocution and strangulation hazard. Secure the cords to prevent children from pulling them or move cords to make them completely inaccessible.

Are there any push-pull toys with strings longer than ten inches? These can become entangled and be a strangulation hazard. This also applies to cords on window blinds.

Do any toys, including stuffed animals and dolls, have small parts that could break off and become a choking hazard? Make sure you have age appropriate toys. Dolls or animals with button eyes or noses, for example, are not appropriate for infants and toddlers.

Are all potentially dangerous items stored out of reach? These items may include disinfectants and other cleaners, scissors, caregivers’ personal belongings.

Is the furniture in the space age-appropriate? Children’s feet should touch the floor when sitting in a chair. If chairs are too tall for children, they are more likely to fall while climbing into or out of

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the chairs.

Is a no shoe policy in place for infant/toddler programs? Germs and dirt entering the environment can be very hazardous for children who spend much of their time on the floor. Surgical booties can be worn over shoes to prevent this.

Do children have unsupervised access to any body of water, whether it is a swimming pool, bucket, or water table? All children should be closely supervised around any body of water. Very young children can drown in a few inches of water.

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