

By Shailaja Desai

Safety for kids is a common topic amongst parents, caregivers and educators. Yet, it still needs much reinforcement on various levels, be it around the house, in schools, or in playgrounds.

Ideally, the best way to inculcate habits of safety in children would be to talk to them on an ongoing basis so that it almost becomes second nature to them. Safety issues do change as children get older, and as adult supervision is not always possible, it is imperative that they are taught this. While one doesn't want to instill fear in a child, certainly one needs to prepare the child to face any issues that may arise for his own safety and well-being. With a seemingly endless list of safety concerns, we look at some of the key ones that are worrisome to most parents.

SAFETY AT HOME

The home is a place

Safety measures

The well-being of your little ones is paramount

where children grow and learn, and need to feel very safe. Here are things to keep in mind:

Ensure all cleaning agents, chemicals and detergents are stored in appropriate cabinets. In the same line, store all medications in a medicine cabinet away from children's reach.

Keep electrical appliances away from children's reach. Put electrical outlet covers on outlets not in use.

A common cause of fires is electricity. If you notice

unusual odors, flickering lights or erratic power surges, have an electrician inspect your house and make sure the wiring system is safe. Cooking gas can be a potential hazard, too. Periodically check for pipes that may need changing, or any gas odor.

Install a smoke detector at home and have it tested from time to time.

If kids are allowed to stay home alone, make sure the doors are fitted with chains and keyholes so they



28 | March 2014





can check before opening the door to strangers.

See to it that all windows and doors leading to balconies are locked. Also, do not put any furniture near windows and at the edge of balconies to discourage climbing.

If you have a swimming pool, ensure it is fenced with a lockable door. If possible, install a warning system for when your child wanders towards it.

Write down important numbers such as the police,

fire and ambulance and post these in a place where they are immediately accessible and visible. Household help should be made aware of them, too.

SAFETY IN SCHOOL

Keeping children safe in school is of prime importance for the school management. It is mandatory, then, for school staff to ensure the environment is secure for everyone.

Classroom

Make sure the floors and carpets are free of sharp

and slippery objects to prevent untoward incidents.

Secure windows, or install safety barriers in front of them to prevent children from climbing over.

Check furniture like tables and chairs for loose joints and sharp edges; secure bookshelves to the walls to prevent them from toppling over.

Throw away broken toys to prevent choking, and be aware of toys and other related products that have been recalled due to components and materials that are harmful to kids.

Cover all electrical outlets that are not in use.

Playground

Adult supervision is crucial in preventing injuries in playgrounds. Ensure adults are present to oversee children playing.

See to it that playground equipment is age-appropriate and has shock-absorbing material around it like rubber mats or sand.

The management must take full measures to main-



tain and repair damaged surfaces, loose joints and parts, rusty equipment, and ensure that grounds are free from any dangerous materials such as broken glass, metal, and any hazardous materials.

It would help if supervisors at school and parents teach children the practice of safe play so that they act responsibly in the playground. Teach them “playground manners” like no shoving and pushing.

School bus

Children require supervision when taking the school bus. The school management must adhere to safety measures for the safe transport of all.

A bus attendant must be available at all times to assist and monitor kids, keeping in mind that no one must be left behind during drop-off time.

Kids must remain seated facing forward during the duration of the trip and avoid playing in the aisles or loitering around.

They must be taught to talk quietly in order not to distract the driver.

Key safety concerns in school also involve safe drop-off procedures, school security, and dealing with medical emergencies.

David Evans, Deputy

Principal for Emirates International School, Meadows, is responsible for student welfare. He says, “We recently implemented the safe drop-off procedure which has been a great success and well-received by the students and parents. This system ensures that children are dropped off in a systematic manner at the front of the school to avoid any traffic congestion and keep student safety in mind.”

The running of the morning drop-off is supervised by Evans, the staff and teachers. Classrooms and premises are constantly monitored through a CCTV system. They also have 24-hour security. Furthermore, the school employs a Premises Manager and a team that conducts routine checks with matters related to maintenance such as checking classroom fittings, A/C units and electrical panels. Fire drills are also a routine.

The school has a doctor and a nurse to handle all emergency protocols.

STRANGER DANGER

Most kids are taught not to talk to strangers. But sometimes parents still need to remind them about the following:

Never accept a ride,

money, candies or sweets from strangers, and never reveal information to strangers.

Not all strangers are bad. Hence, it would be important to approach a uniformed person like a security guard, the police or perhaps a storekeeper for help when they get lost.

To play in groups, and to always keep an eye on any parent accompanying them in stores or in parks.

That it is alright to say “No” and “I don’t know you” to strangers.

While we want our children to experience a sense of independence and freedom as they grow, taking an active role in their safety is crucial. Talking about safety openly and without fear from an early age helps make them alert and vigilant at all times.

