

Parents

health

your child

Candle Safety



Candles set a cozy mood for the holidays—but they can easily start a fire if you're not careful. In fact, the number of candle-related house fires nearly doubles in the month of December, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Be sure to follow these safety tips.

Lock up all matches and lighters after lighting candles. About three out of five fires started by children happen when they play with matches and lighters.

Place candles where kids and pets can't reach them and at least one foot away from Christmas trees, curtains, wreaths, and holiday decorations. Don't leave them near air vents, open windows, or ceiling fans.

Never leave a lit candle unattended. Even if you're leaving the room for just a few minutes, blow it out.

Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, and are made from nonflammable material.

Make sure smoke alarms are installed and working, and teach your children to exit the house as quickly as possible if they see a fire.

Is It an Ear Infection?

If your baby or toddler is prone to ear infections, you might wonder whether you need to take her to the doctor every time she gets a cold and is fussy. EarCheck (\$49), a new, easy-to-use device, emits safe sound waves that detect fluid in the middle ear—a key sign of infection. "If the monitor registers in the red zone, let your doctor know," says Jerome Klein, M.D., professor of pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine. "If it's green, you don't have to worry that it's an ear infection." However, if you're still concerned or your child shows other signs of illness, call the doctor.



Q I know babies aren't supposed to eat honey, but I've seen honey listed on the ingredients list of foods that babies eat. Are they safe?

A Yes. Regular honey can contain spores that cause botulism, a serious form of food poisoning that babies are more vulnerable to because of their immature digestive tract. But honey that's added to manufactured foods like crackers is safe because those potentially dangerous spores are deactivated when the honey is heated to high temperatures during processing, according to the National Honey Board. (Be careful: The same is not true for honey that's heated at home, as in a cup of tea or a bowl of oatmeal.)

IT HAPPENED TO ME



"MY SON SWALLOWED A WHOLE BOTTLE OF ANTIBIOTICS." When Carrie Cox's 3-year-old son, Collin, had strep throat, the doctor prescribed strawberry-flavored chewable medicine. Cox put the bottle in the bathroom medicine cabinet before bed, and then, in the middle of the night, her 10-year-old son, Brennan, woke her up because he'd found Collin up on the bathroom counter eating all the pills in the bottle. She called poison control and took him to the doctor the next day. Luckily, he's fine. "Now we keep all our medicine in a toolbox with a padlock on it," says the mom from Burlington, Kentucky. Send your own safety lesson to ihtrm@parentsmag.com.