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Contact: Laura DiRisio
E-mail: marketing@svat.com
4080 Montrose Road
Niagara Falls, ON L2H 1J9

Baby-Proof Your Home: Tips for Protecting Your Tots

This September marks the 26th anniversary of Baby Safety Month, a program sponsored by the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA). Preparation and prevention are the key messages this month, as unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death among children under fourteen. Each year, one out of every four children sustains an injury serious enough to require medical attention—that's over 39,000 children every single day (*Safe Kids USA*).

If you are about to become a parent or know someone who is, take the time to child-proof your home. By installing a few simple safety features around the house, you protect your little one from numerous hazards that can otherwise get overlooked. There are many easy and affordable ways to safely prepare a residence for small children. You can prevent injuries and increase your peace of mind, knowing that your loved ones are safe.

Baby monitors let you hear and/or see what your baby is doing from another room. A microphone or camera is placed near the baby and you are able to listen or watch from another part of the house. An audio/video monitor provides a clear image of your child and transmits noises so you can be alerted to crying and movement. Newer baby monitors offer digital signals, allowing the audio and video signals to be protected from static and interception. Levana's BABYVIEW20 is among the next generation of digital video monitors. It offers helpful features such as night vision, so you can see your baby in the dark, a built-in night light, and soothing lullabies that play directly from the camera (www.myLEVANA.com).

When your baby is ready to start eating heated food, it can be a challenge to know what temperature is just right. Baby food thermometers can tell you when something is too hot to feed to your child. This prevents mouth burns and also choking, which is the number one safety hazard for infants. Dream Baby offers heat sensitive spoons that change color when food is too hot. Find them at www.amazon.com (model number F534).

Get a head start on toddler-proofing your home by placing covers and locks on power outlets, cupboard doors and toilets. Babies tend to start crawling between six and ten months old, and as they explore, they face a number of potential hazards. Outlet covers can be found at most hardware and baby stores for under \$5. They protect your child from electrocution and prevent them from sticking objects inside power sources. Plastic locks for drawers, cupboards and toilets cost around \$20 for a set of four. These keep your toddler from getting access to potential dangers, such as toxic cleaning supplies, cutlery, scissors and water. Find lots of toddler-proofing options at www.babiesrus.com.

Be proactive about securing your baby's environment:

- Use gates to separate rooms and stairways
- Never leave your baby unattended

- Toxic materials should not be kept under the sink. Place them high up, out of a baby's reach
- Always use a car seat when traveling with your child as it is required in all 50 states
- Ask to see credentials when selecting a child care facility and request a tour

This September, ensure the safety of your child. Make yourself and those who spend time with your children more aware by participating in Baby Safety Month. For more information, visit www.jpma.org.