

Prevent accidents, injuries this summer

Homes are supposed to serve as sanctuaries, but safety hazards may be lurking in many homes. Thousands upon thousands of people fall victim to unintentional injuries each year because of simple safety mistakes made around the house.

According to the security company A Secure Life, unintentional injuries result in an average of 21 million medical visits each year in the United States.

Many people may not realize that some of the more common home injuries can be prevented. The National Safety Council encourages everyone to be aware of home hazards and to take proper safety precautions.

Here are some of the more common causes of intentional injury and death at home and how to prevent members of your household from falling victim to them.

POISONING

Many substances found in typical households contribute to poisonings each year. In recent years, prescription drug overdose has become one of the leading causes of unintentional poisonings. Prescription opioids and heroin killed more than 33,000 people in 2015, more than any year on record, says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nearly half of all opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid. Safer, more effective alternatives to pain management may reduce the number of deaths linked to opioids.

All medications should be kept out of the reach of children. Medications should be kept in original packaging and taken only for prescribed reasons, and prescription drugs should never be shared.

FALLING

Falling is a concern at any age, but it is the No. 1 cause of death for individuals ages 71 and older, according to the NSC. Hazardous conditions at home, and not necessarily age, contribute to many instances of falling at home. Removing clutter, rearranging furniture to facilitate movement around the house, improving lighting and visibility, and installing grab bars in high-traffic areas are just some ways to reduce the likelihood of falling inside a home.

DROWNING

The CDC reports that, between 2005 and 2014, there were an average of 3,536 fatal unintentional drownings (non-boating related) each year in the United States. That equates to about 10 deaths per day. Drowning remains a major concern for children age 14 and under. Summer swimming and boating-related activities can increase the risk of drowning as well.

Instances of drowning can be prevented by providing barriers between homes and pools. Children should never be left unsupervised in the bath or near bodies of water. Adults should avoid alcohol when swimming or boating.

Swimmers and those near the water should always wear a well-fitting life preserver.

Homeowners who are aware of common home hazards and take steps to reduce such hazards can dramatically lower the risk of accidents at their homes.

Stay safe when landscaping

Landscaping is typically viewed as a chore by homeowners, many of who enjoy doing some work on their lawns and gardens. But only few homeowners may recognize the potential dangers of lawn maintenance.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that more than 230,000 people per year are treated for various injuries resulting from lawn and garden tools. Common injuries include loss of fingers, lacerations, broken and dislocated bones, eye injuries, and burns. Many of these injuries are entirely preventable if homeowners prioritize safety when tending to their lawns and gardens.

UNDERSTAND THE EQUIPMENT

Homeowners should not assume they know how to use all of the tools necessary to maintain lush lawns and bountiful gardens. Familiarize yourself with the proper operation of manual and motorized equipment by reading the owner's manual thoroughly, making special note of recommended safety guidelines.

Take some time to locate the power buttons and other parts by comparing them to illustrations in the guide. Once you feel comfortable handling the equipment, then you can begin to use it.



COURTESY PHOTO

Read manuals, wear protective equipment and be safe when doing lawn and garden work.

WEAR APPROPRIATE PROTECTIVE GEAR

Failure to wear protective gear can lead to injury. Personal protective equipment includes gloves, eye protection, ear protection, boots and a hard hat if necessary. When working during visibility conditions or at night, wear a reflective vest.

Other protective items include a hat to shade your eyes from the sun's rays. Sunscreen will protect the skin from UVA and UVB radiation. Long

pants and sleeves can guard against flying debris.

WATCH YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Thousands of injuries occur to children and pets who get hurt around mowers. It's best if children and pets remain indoors when homeowners are mowing or using other power equipment that may kick up debris. Children under the age of 12 may not have the strength or ability to operate lawn tools. Also, never

make a game of riding a child on a riding mower. Nobody under the age of 16 should operate riding lawn mowers.

GET APPROVAL BEFORE DIGGING

It's difficult to know what is beneath the ground without having a property surveyed and marked. Digging without approval can result in damage to gas lines or water/sewer pipes. Always check with the utility company before digging trenches or holes.

UNPLUG OR TURN OFF ALL EQUIPMENT

When not in use, keep lawn equipment off. Do not try to repair or fix a snag or obstruction in equipment while it is on. Don't modify the equipment in any way, such as removing protective guards.

EXERCISE CAUTION WITH CHEMICALS

Those who choose to use pesticides or fertilizers should follow manufacturers' safety instructions. Avoid application on windy days or right before a rainstorm, as this can spread the product and damage the ecosystem. Keep people and pets away from treated areas.

Maintaining the yard is both a necessity and a hobby. Homeowners who prioritize safety can greatly reduce their risk of injury. — Metro

Tips to avoid aches and pains when gardening

People who have not spent much time in a garden may not consider this rewarding hobby much of a threat to their health. But as veteran gardeners can attest, gardening can contribute to nagging aches and pains that can force even the most ardent green-thumbers indoors.

Gardening is a physical activity that, despite its peaceful nature, can be demanding on the body. Thankfully, there are several ways that gardening enthusiasts can prevent the aches and pains that can sometimes pop up after long days in the garden.

- Use ergonomic gardening tools. These tools are designed to prevent the types of aches, pains

and injuries that can cut gardeners' seasons short.

Gardening injuries can affect any area of the body, but injuries or aches and pains affecting the back, wrists and hands are among the most common physical problems gardeners endure. Look for tools that reduce the strain on these areas of the body. Even arthritis sufferers who love to garden may find that ergonomic tools make it possible for them to spend more time in their gardens.

- Alternate tasks. Repetitive-strain injuries can affect gardeners who spend long periods of time performing the same activity in their gardens. By alternating tasks during gardening sessions,

gardeners can reduce their risk of suffering repetitive strain injuries. Remember to include some simple jobs even on busy gardening days so the body gets a break.

- Take frequent breaks. Breaks can help combat the stiffness and muscle aches that may not appear until gardeners finish their gardening sessions.

Breaks help to alleviate muscles or joints that can become overtaxed when gardening for long, uninterrupted periods of time. When leaning down or working on your hands and knees, stand up to take breaks every 20 minutes or the moment aches and pains start to make their presence felt.

- Maintain good posture.

Back injuries have a tendency to linger, which can keep gardeners indoors and out of their gardens. When gardening, maintain good posture to prevent back injuries.

Gardening back braces can protect the back by providing support and making it easier for gardeners to maintain their posture.

Tool pouches attached to gardening stools also can be less taxing on the back than gardening belts worn at the waist.

Gardening might not be a contact sport, but it can cause pain if gardeners do not take steps to prevent the onset of muscle aches and strains when spending time in their gardens.

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DID YOU KNOW?

If you think that the only way to exercise and burn calories involves gym equipment, think again. Yard work can be just as challenging as a thorough aerobic workout at a nearby fitness club. To reap the greatest benefits, gardeners should use as little motorized machinery as possible. Manual tools will get you moving and can burn a substantial amount of calories. Try to vary positions and alternate which hands you use to reduce strain and get an even workout. Fitness experts say that gardening can improve strength, increase endurance and assist with flexibility. According to a report in the UK publication *The Telegraph*, clearing a pond or weeding can burn some 300 calories in an hour. Forty-five minutes worth of gardening can burn as many calories as 30 minutes of aerobics. — Metro



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