



HLTH113: Building and Physical Premises Safety: Indoor Environments Handout

Welcome to HLTH113:

According to the CDC, there are close to 70 million emergency room and physicians' office visits annually for unintentional injuries in America. The causes include falls, choking, suffocation, poisoning, drowning, and vehicle accidents. However, most of these accidents can be prevented, particularly in child care centers, where strong safety policies and careful supervision can make all the difference. This course provides practical information and tips to help you maintain a safe indoor environment for young children.

Objectives:

By taking notes on the handout and successfully answering assessment questions, participants will meet the following objectives as a result of taking this course:

- Identify best practices for child supervision
- Identify ways to prevent common general facility and classroom hazards
- Recognize recommended strategies for ensuring toy safety
- Recall strategies for reducing the spread of germs in the environment
- Recognize safety standards and practices that are specific to the infant/toddler environment
- Identify practices for preventing exposure to potential health hazards
- Recall details of how to respond to accidents and injuries

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Child Supervision

Active Supervision

To achieve active supervision in every classroom, the program should:

- Create a system for child supervision.
- Deliver thorough staff member training.
- Offer resources to ensure systematic implementation.
- Ensure no child is left unattended.

Additionally, caregivers should enact these active supervision strategies from the [Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center](#):

Set Up the Environment

Position Staff

Scan and Count

Listen

Anticipate Children's Behavior

Engage and Redirect

General Facility Safety

Doors and Gates

Common hazards with doors and gates include:

- Pinched fingers.
- Severed fingers.
- Doors hit children as they are opened or closed.
- Children run into glass doors.

How to avoid injuries from doors and gates:

- Make sure that doors and gates are closed when not in use.
- Open doors slowly, as children may be playing on the other side.
- Never leave an open door unattended, as children may slam doors shut and hurt other children.
- Teach children that doors should be opened carefully and slowly.
- Post an "Open Slowly" sign on each door as a reminder for people entering the room.

Stairways

Electricity

Lighting and Window Treatments

Kitchen Safety

Common hazards in the cooking area include:

- Children being cut by sharp implements.
- Burns from a hot stove or hot water.
- Skin burns from poisonous cleaning chemicals.

Plastics

When it comes to plastics, be aware of:

1. ***Bisphenol A:***
2. ***Phthalates:***

Fire Safety Preparation

In addition to fire safety items, it is also essential to practice fire drills at least once a month.

- All fire drills should be documented.
- A fire evacuation procedure should be approved and certified in writing by a fire inspector.
- Fire drills should be practiced at various times during the day, including nap time and during varied activities that test accessibility to all exits.
- The facility should time fire drills. They should aim to evacuate all persons in the specific number of minutes recommended by the local fire department for the fire evacuation.
- Evacuation cribs can be used to evacuate infants if rolling is possible on the evacuation route(s).

Indoor Air Quality

There are many sources of indoor air pollution, including:

- Combustion sources including oil, gas, kerosene, coal, wood, and tobacco products.
- Building materials and furnishings such as asbestos insulation, damp carpet, and cabinetry or furniture made of certain pressed wood products.
- Products for household cleaning and maintenance, personal care, or hobbies.
- Central heating and cooling systems and humidification devices.
- Outdoor sources such as radon, pesticides, and outdoor air pollution that make their way inside.

High pollutant concentrations can remain in the air for long periods after some of these activities.

Here are recommendations for improving indoor air quality:

- Never smoke on the premises or near children.
- Prevent mold and mildew by reducing excess moisture. This includes fixing all leaky pipes and increasing ventilation by opening windows and using fans.
- Clean and dry carpets when something is spilled to prevent mold growth.
- Do not use scented candles, oils, or air fresheners that contain chemicals and solvents.
- Use biodegradable cleaning products with less toxicity, so they do not make indoor air unhealthy.
- Seal all solvents, adhesives, paints, and similar substances and store containers in a well-ventilated area.
- Avoid classroom pets with fur or feathers if children or adults are sensitive to these allergens.
- Test the building for radon, the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.
- If asbestos is intact, leave it alone. If it is damaged, hire a professional to collect and test a sample.
- Allow any paint to dry for 24 hours in a well-ventilated room before reentering the area.

Bathroom Safety

Bathroom Supervision

Preventing Child Abuse

Bathroom Ventilation

Classroom Safety

High-Traffic Areas

A **traffic area** is any area where:

A **high-traffic area** is an area where:

Common hazards include:

- Toys that were not picked up.
- Rugs that are wrinkled or with rolled-up edges.
- Water on the floor.
- Any obstacle that might restrict the flow of traffic.

You can avoid injuries in the **traffic areas** by making sure:

- Rugs lay flat on the floor.
- Walkways are free of items that someone may trip on.
- Chairs are placed under tables when not in use.
- Entryways and emergency exits are not blocked by furniture.
- Spills and water on the floor is immediately cleaned up to prevent injuries from slips.
- Children keep blocks and other materials in their designated learning centers.
- Walkways are wide enough to easily pass through.

The Play Space

The **play space** is the area:

Common hazards in the play space include:

- Children trip on toys left unattended.
- Children run into other children as they move about.
- Children bump into the furniture.

The Room Arrangement

To make sure you have a safe design:

- There should be a variety of learning centers along with space for the children to explore.
- There should be adequate space in traffic areas.
- Avoid having cluttered areas or learning centers that are too close together.
- Materials to be used in a learning center should be stored on shelves in the learning center.

Noise

Here are some suggestions to help you dampen noise in the learning environment:

- Noncombustible acoustical panels
- Rugs or carpets
- Fabrics, pillows, and cushions that are easy to wash
- Wall coverings and artwork
- Partitions and shelving
- Noise dampening drapes or curtains
- Chair leg tips
- Corkboards or bulletin boards covered with felt

Toy Safety

With regard to safety practices, any item used by the children in the classroom should be considered a toy.

Common toy hazards include:

- Choking hazards due to small parts.
- Children being cut by sharp or broken toys.
- Hearing damage from loud toys.

Toy Selection

Here are some things to avoid when selecting toys:

- Avoid toys with sharp points or edges.
- Avoid toys that produce loud noises.
- Make sure straps or strings are less than 7 inches long to avoid the risk of strangulation.
- Stuffed or cloth toys should be machine washable and preferably flame retardant.

Consider the children's age, interests, and skill levels when selecting toys. ***Make sure toys are developmentally appropriate.*** [Here](#) is a list of recommendations from NAEYC to consider.

Follow Recommendations

Follow age and safety recommendations on toy labels.

UL-Approved Materials

Toy Storage

Shelving

Toy Chests

Toy Maintenance

Cleaning and Sanitizing Toys

Art Material Safety

Follow these guidelines when using art materials in your environment:

- Store surplus materials away from children.
- Keep food and drinks out of the art area.
- Give only small amounts to minimize spills and mishaps.
- Supervise children closely to prevent unintended uses of art materials.
- Adults should mix powdered and extremely dusty materials.
- Wash hands after using materials. Do not use solvents to clean the skin.
- Watch for unusual reactions to chemicals.
- Cover cuts and sores with bandages before using materials.
- Contact the **National Poison Control Center Hotline, 1-800-222-1222**, or the nearest certified Poison Control Center, if necessary.

Note: Even products labeled "non-toxic," when used unintendedly, can have harmful effects.

Art materials to **AVOID**:

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Instead, **USE**:

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Reducing the Spread of Germs

The term *bio contaminant* refers to:

A *pathogen* is:

Examples of pathogens include:

- Bacteria
- Viruses
- Parasites

Handwashing

Note: Fact sheets related to handwashing are available through the [CDC](#).

How to Wash Your Hands Effectively

The following recommended handwashing practices apply to both children and adults:

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Step 5

Step 6

Antibacterial Soap

Hand Sanitizer

How should hand sanitizer be used?

- If available, use a wipe to remove dirt.
- Apply the product to the palm of one hand. (Read the label to learn the correct amount.)
- Rub hands together.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

Note: To prevent children from ingesting alcohol, store hand sanitizers out of reach of children. Hand sanitizers should only be used under direct caregiver supervision.

When Should Staff Wash Their Hands?

All staff members should wash their hands immediately upon entering the building.

Also, the [CDC](#) recommends washing your hands:

- **Before, during, and after**
- **Before**
- **Before** and **after**
- **Before** and **after**
- **After**
- **After**

- **After**
- **After**
- **After**
- **After**

If disposable gloves are used:

The person conducting health screenings:

When Should Children Wash Their Hands?

Handwashing should be a regular part of the daily routine. As a matter of habit, children should wash their hands:

-
- **Before**
- **Before** and **after**
- **After**
- **After**
- **After**
- **After**
- **After**
-

Note: During this time, you may choose to limit sand and water play. You could create individual sensory bins for each child to help reduce the spread of germs.

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

Routine Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

To **clean** means:

To **sanitize** means:

To **disinfect** is:

Caring for Our Children provides an excellent model with ["Appendix K: Routine Schedule for Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting."](#)

Exposure to Blood and Other Body Fluids

Infant and Toddler Safety

Furniture and Equipment

Cribs

Mattresses should fit _____.

The crib sides should not be less than _____.

General safety standards call for rails to rise at least _____.

Here are some additional safety tips regarding cribs in the infant/toddler room:

- Crib slats should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart to prevent body parts from becoming stuck between the slats.
- Do not place cribs near windows, as children may play with drapery cords or push up against screens and fall out of the window.
- Do not use plastic materials such as mattress covers. These materials may cause a child to suffocate.
- Do not use mobiles that the children can reach. Possible choking or strangulation may result.

Please visit the [CPSC website](#) for more information about crib safety.

Playpens

Playpen safety guidelines:

- If playpens are allowed, make sure the slats in playpens are not more than 2 3/8 inches apart.
- If the playpen is made of mesh, make sure the mesh is small enough not to get a button or toe caught.
- Make sure all hinges and latches on playpens are secure and will not catch fingers.
- Ensure the playpen floor provides adequate support and will not collapse when a child is placed in it or leans against the sides.

High Chairs

High chairs are for:

Walkers and Exersaucers

Diaper-Changing Tables

Choking Hazards

The following are some of the more common foods that cause choking:

- Hotdogs (acceptable if cut into small pieces)
- Grapes and cherries (acceptable if cut in quarters)
- Raw vegetables (acceptable if cut into small pieces)
- Nuts (including nut butters) and seeds
- Chunks of meat or cheese
- Popcorn
- Hard, gooey, or sticky candies
- Chewing gum
- Raisins

For more information on Choking Hazard Safety, read [Nationwide Children's](#) recommendations.

The following non-food items are also considered dangerous choking hazards for young children:

- Coins
- Marbles
- Pen or marker caps
- Small batteries
- Small compressible toys
- Balloons
- Styrofoam packing material
- Toys and objects that have a diameter of less than 1 and 1/4 inches
- Toys and objects with small detachable parts

Jewelry and accessories worn by children or adults may also present choking hazards.

These include:

- Earrings
- Rings
- Buttons
- Hair barrettes
- Beaded bracelets that may break and be ingested by children

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

3 Types of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death:

SIDS.

Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed.

Instances include:

- **Suffocation:**
- **Overlay:**
- **Wedging:**
- **Strangulation:**

Unknown Cause.

Infants should be placed on their:

Here are other prevention strategies:

- Use a firm mattress that is safety-approved.
- Avoid loose bedding.
- Soft, cuddly stuffed animals and fluffy comforters should NOT be placed in the crib with infants.
- Do not expose the child to smoke in the air or on your clothing.
- **Guard against overheating.** Keep the sleeping area at normal room temperature, and do not use blankets and quilts. Place a thin cotton cap on an infant if the room feels chilly.

For more information, you can:

- Take the CCEI course *HLTH110: Protecting Infants: Preventing SIDS and Shaken Baby Syndrome*.
- Check with your local health regulatory agency.
- Call 1-800-221-SIDS.
- Visit www.sids.org.
- Contact your local doctor.

Additional Potential Health Hazards

Poisoning

There are 4 possible ways a child or adult may be poisoned:

Inhalation

Inhalation occurs when:

Examples of inhaling poisons include mist from:

- Disinfectants
- Cleaning vapors
- Other toxic fumes

Absorption

Ingestion

Additional tips to avoid poisoning through ingestion:

- Never tell children that medicine is candy.
- Keep chemicals in their original containers (e.g., do not store paint thinner in an empty cola bottle).
- Use child locks on cabinet doors and drawers that contain chemicals or medications.

Injection

Caregivers must be able to recognize and respond to ***symptoms of toxic poisoning***:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| • Difficulty breathing | • Headache or blurred vision |
| • Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat, or respiratory tract | • Dizziness |
| • Burns or redness around the mouth | • Clumsiness or lack of coordination |
| • Vomiting | • Confusion or altered mental state |
| • Cramps or diarrhea | • Seizures |

The telephone number for the poison center should be posted in a location where it is readily available in emergency situations (e.g., next to the telephone). Poison centers are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and can be reached at 1-800-222-1222.

Chemicals and Medications

Various _____ ***are used as ingredients in common cleaning products.***

Bleach is a common cleaner in the early childhood industry but can:

Storing Chemicals and Other Hazardous Materials

Medication Storage

It is essential to store medications properly to ensure that children do not accidentally ingest them.

- ***All medications must be stored out of children's reach.***
- ***Medicines should be kept under lock and key or secured.***

- ***Always read the entire product or prescription label.***

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Lead

Since children's bodies are not fully developed, lead poisoning can cause:

- Brain, liver, and kidney damage
- Slowed development
- Learning or behavior problems
- Lowered intellect (or IQ)
- Hearing loss
- Restlessness

For more information, review ["What You Need to Know About Lead Poisoning,"](#) published by the EPA.

Radon

Radon is a:

The facility can be tested for radon by professionals or by using a radon test kit available at www.sosradon.org. Contact the [state radon office](#) for assistance if the facility has a radon level of 4 pCi/L or higher.

Indoor Mold

Mold is a type of fungus that lives:

Mold can enter the body through:

The possible effects of mold on a person's health include:

- Respiratory illness
- Wheezing
- Dry hacking cough
- Eye irritation
- Nasal irritation and stuffiness
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Some rare forms of mold can cause acute illness or even death

Eliminating and Preventing Mold

The best way to avoid the hazards of mold is to prevent mold from growing in the first place:

- Use a dehumidifier in humid climates.
- Remove items from the washer immediately.
- Insulate windows, pipes, and floors to prevent condensation.
- Ensure ventilation systems are cleaned and well maintained.

Responding to Injuries and Accidents

Completing an Injury Report

Write down all details regarding the incident, such as:

- The time of the injury.
- Location of the injury.
- How the injury happened.
- Equipment or materials involved in the injury.
- First-aid or treatment is provided after the injury.
- Actions taken to prevent the event from occurring again.
- Witnesses and the name of the person completing the form.

Here is [guidance](#) and an [example](#) of an injury report from CFOC.

Basic Emergency Procedures

When an injury occurs, appropriate first aid measures should be taken as permitted by state child care licensing.

State licensing requirements usually dictate what kind of basic first-aid training staff must receive. The [American Red Cross](#) can provide first-aid and CPR classes. Whether your job description requires it or not, it is best if all ECE professionals take a professional CPR training specifically for infants and small children.

This Red Cross [reference](#) provides the steps of infant and child CPR techniques, but this is not something you can read during an emergency. In the event of an emergency, you will need to be able to perform CPR from memory.

Note: CPR techniques for infants differ from those used for children ages 1-8.

When a Child is Unresponsive

Program staff members should prepare for how they will respond if a child becomes unresponsive or dies on the premises. The steps below assume that there is a second adult in the environment; however, plans should include how a lone teacher will call for help and care for the victim and the other children.

Basic procedures for unresponsive children are as follows:

1. Check for alertness. Shake or tap the person gently. Do not shake infants.
2. If there is no response, call for help.
3. Begin appropriate CPR procedures
4. Order someone else to call 911. If you are alone, begin CPR procedures before calling 911.
5. Remove the other children from the area and meet their emotional needs.
6. Notify the child's emergency contact. Be prepared to inform them of which hospital the person is being taken to.
7. Notify law enforcement and follow all instructions.
8. Do not disturb the area or allow anyone in the area until the scene has been cleared.
9. Notify your licensing agency about the event.

Safety Checklists

For additional information about child safety precautions, explore some of the following links:

- [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and ECE](#)
- [Consumer Products Safety Commission](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [American Association of Poison Control Centers](#)
- [Door Safety](#)
- [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Network](#)
- [National Child Care Information Center](#)



HLTH113: Building and Physical Premises Safety: Indoor Environments Safety Evaluation Questions

Evaluate Supervision Policies

NAEYC's ["Program Administrator Guide to Evaluating Child Supervision Practices"](#) offers these questions program staff can use to evaluate and write clear policies and procedures:

1. *List your program's written supervision policy and related procedures and their locations (i.e., in the staff handbook, family handbook, program website, orientation materials, etc.).*
2. *Are the written policies and procedures easy for staff members and families to understand?*
3. *Do written procedures provide staff members with clear guidance on implementing the supervision policy?*
4. *Before working with children, do staff members receive a written copy of these policies and procedures?*
5. *Do families receive a copy of these policies and procedures upon enrollment?*
6. *How frequently are your written supervision policies and procedures reviewed? What was the date of the last review?*
7. *How do these written policies and procedures address specific issues about supervision, such as:*
 - *Transitions*
 - *Nap/rest time*
 - *Inside/outside play time*
 - *Transportation to and from the program*
 - *Field trips*
 - *Restroom routines*
 - *Drop-off and pick-up times*
 - *Other*

General Facility Safety

Take a minute and evaluate the following aspects of general facility safety:

1. Have there been repeated safety issues related to doors or gates in your facility?
2. Is there a way to make stairs safer for children in your program?
3. Are you doing everything necessary to keep children safe from electrical injuries?
4. Have all hazards related to window treatment cords been removed from the environment?
5. Does the program restrict children's access to the kitchen?
6. Is your program prepared to respond in the event of a fire?
7. What steps are taken to improve the indoor air quality in the facility?
8. Have measures been taken to keep children safe while using the bathroom?

Classroom Safety

Take a minute and evaluate your classroom environment:

1. Are any rugs or mats rolling up on the edges, creating a tripping hazard?
2. Is it possible to walk past tables easily when the chairs are in use?

3. Is there a stretch of space where children tend to run? If yes, is there a way to rearrange the room to break up this space?
4. Are any learning centers expanding outside of their space consistently? If so, do you need to remove some of the items in this center or rearrange the space?
5. Is any furniture interfering with your ability to supervise children in your classroom?
6. Is your space easily accessible to children?
7. Is there a high, lockable cabinet or a place outside of the classroom where you can store your belongings?
8. Does the noise level consistently get too high? If so, how could you lower the noise level in the room?
9. Is there a location in the classroom where children can go if they would like some quiet?

Toy Safety

Take a minute and evaluate your toy selection, maintenance, and storage:

1. Are the toys meeting the developmental needs of the children? If not, what adjustments could be made?
2. Are all manufacturer guidelines able to be followed?
3. Do any of the toys pose a choking hazard due to small parts or pieces?
4. Are any toys broken? If so, can it be appropriately repaired, or does it need to be disposed of?
5. Is there a system to ensure that toys are properly cleaned and sanitized?
6. Are toys easily accessible to children on low shelving?
7. Are there any items that are hard to put away at clean-up time? If so, do you need to lessen the number of items or change the storage?
8. Are all art materials safe and nontoxic?

Infant and Toddler Safety

Take a minute and evaluate safety practices in the infant/toddler environment:

1. Do cribs meet all safety requirements?
2. If playpens or exersaucers are allowed, are they used in a manner that is safe for children?
3. Could more be done to keep children safe when using highchairs?
4. What can be done to make the diaper changing area safer for children?
5. What steps are taken to reduce the risk of choking in your program?
6. Are all steps to prevent SIDS followed in your program?



HLTH113: Building and Physical Premises Safety: Indoor Environments Try This! Activities

Try This!

Teach Fire Safety

The [National Fire Protection Association website](#) provides helpful resources for ECE professionals, families, and administrators. This includes activity sheets and lesson plans for the ECE environment, safety sheets and tips for programs, and resources to share with families to promote home safety.

Click on any of these links to access free resources:

- [Teaching Tools](#)
- [Public Education](#)
- [Sparky the Fire Dog](#)
- [Safety Tip Sheets](#)

Try This!

Create a "Calm or Quiet Corner"

Sometimes children get overwhelmed by stimuli in the classroom. Therefore, a "Calm or Quiet Corner" can help them escape when they need quiet. Quiet centers should never be used as a form of punishment for a child but should give them a place where they feel safe and secure. The frequency and time that a child uses the quiet center will be different, depending on the individual child's needs.

Teachers can take advantage of the room arrangement by placing this zone away from louder learning centers. While setting up some separation in this area is important, ensuring that children are still fully visible is essential.

Stock this area with noise-canceling headphones, calming music, books, coloring pages, sensory items (such as [relaxation bottles](#), fidget items, doughs or slime, etc.), and soft materials.

Try This!

Calming Activities

Relaxation is a learned skill, and transition activities that help children slow down their bodies and minds provide a daily opportunity for children to practice this skill. In addition, teaching relaxation strategies can help children learn skills before using them. For example, try calming activities after high-energy times, such as recess.

Consider implementing:

- [Yoga](#)
- [Deep Breathing](#)
- [Silent Minutes](#)

For more on this topic, check out our courses:

- *CUR120: Trouble-Free Transitions that Teach*
- *SOC102: From Chaotic to Calm: Managing Stress in the Classroom*
- *SOC106: The Value of Mindfulness in Early Childhood Settings*

Try This!

Support Successful Clean-Up Routines

There are several things you can do that will help children during clean-up routines:

- Provide an advanced warning so that children can bring their play to a close before it is time to clean up.
- Play or sing a special clean-up song that indicates that it is time for the clean-up routine to begin.
- Install picture labels on shelves and bins to help children recognize where items belong.
- Turn clean-up into a cooperative game, where one child cleans up the blue blocks while another child cleans up the red blocks.
- If there is a large job to accomplish, be sure there are enough children to help to avoid frustration.
- Provide a picture of what each learning center looks like when it is cleaned up so that children can compare their results to the posted image.
- Create a class job of Clean-up Inspector, who is responsible for making sure learning centers and traffic areas are clean and safe.