

20

A Dangerous Place for Young Children

WHICH PLACE DO you think is the most dangerous environment for young children?

From my experience, I think a child's home is probably the most dangerous. Let me explain why, though I have no statistics to prove it. I do know some examples.

Very young children do not understand danger. When they are still infants, they only know when they want food, so they cry. When they are a few months old and learn to use their hands, they will grab things and try to eat them, no matter what those things are: buttons, toys, or whatever. Everything goes straight into the mouth if no one is watching them. Recently I read about a child who died when he put into his mouth a toy that apparently had a dangerous chemical in the colouring.

Another danger for a child at home is fire. A few years ago, a three-year old boy woke up and began to look for something to play with. There was no one beside him. He found a box of matches and managed to light one. Soon his cot was on fire, and the child was burned to death.

It is dangerous to leave a young child at home alone, even if he is sleeping and his mother just wants to do some quick shopping. In one case in Hong Kong, a small child woke up and

saw that his mother was not there. He managed to push a chair to an open window, leaned out of the window to look for his mother, overbalanced, and fell several storeys. When his mother returned, her son was already dead.

When I was a teacher in England, I lived with a family where there was a young boy of about three. This cute little boy was very fascinated by electric plugs, so the family covered all the plugs in the house so that he could not touch them. One day, however, he ran into the kitchen and grabbed an electric flex attached to a boiling kettle. He did not know the danger, and the water spilt all over him. He died soon after, and his family was devastated. Accidents to children can happen so quickly!

Another danger at home is medicine. Almost all medicine bottles warn: "Keep out of reach of children". Sometimes we read of parents who take their medicine and leave the bottle on the table. All too quickly, a child may pick it up and drink the medicine, with fatal results.

Accidents like those I have mentioned happen over and over. A parent can never to be too careful, and should never leave a young child alone under any circumstances. You young readers will nearly all be parents one day. I hope you will avoid these and all other dangers in the home.