

Teach your child to lock, drop, and roll

If your child uses a wheelchair and his clothes or hair catch on fire, teach him how to lock his wheelchair, drop out of the wheelchair and onto the floor, and to roll back and forth to smother the flames.



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FIRE SAFETY FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



At a young age, most children are taught about the importance of fire safety. At Riley Hospital for Children, we believe that *all* children should be taught fire safety, including children with special needs. More importantly, all family members and caregivers should plan for a fire and practice fire safety skills regularly. Please use the following tips to help you develop a fire safety plan for children you know who have special needs.

PLAN

- Fire can occur at any time, in any place. Develop plans for children with special needs who may need to evacuate their home, school, church or other frequently visited locations. If the child needs help exiting the building, make sure he/she has more than one person identified and trained to assist them in the event of a fire. Contact your child's school and learn your child's fire escape plan. Does this plan include help planned for your child?
- If your child requires any life sustaining medical or mobility equipment, include steps in your plan to make sure that equipment is available after evacuation from the building.
- If your child cannot clearly hear warning sounds and smoke alarms, consider installing a flashing smoke alarm on every level of your home and/or a vibrating smoke alarm where your child sleeps or rests.

TEACH

- All children learn differently. Some may require pictures, sign language, verbal or physical repetition. Others may learn by touch or by modeling the behavior of others who practice fire safety techniques. Decide how your child learns best and teach him the fire escape plan and other ways to stay safe during a fire using these methods.
- Teach your child how to dial 9-1-1 and how to provide information for emergency personnel. Check with local fire departments or 9-1-1 services to be certain they are TTY/TDD equipped. If the 9-1-1 operator may have trouble understanding the child, consider having an alarm system installed that will automatically alert your local fire department of an emergency.
- Teach your child to stay low in smoke. If she is unable to lower herself to the ground to crawl, teach a responsible adult how to help her get to the floor and onto a blanket. The adult should also remain low in the smoke and use the blanket to pull the child through the building to safety. Another option for a child who cannot crawl is to teach her to use a scooter board to propel herself out of a building.
- If your child uses a wheelchair and his clothes or hair catch on fire, teach him how to lock his wheelchair, drop out of the wheelchair and onto the floor and to roll back and forth to smother the flames. If there is an adult present and the child or adult has a fire smothering blanket, this can also be used to smother the flames.

PRACTICE

Test all smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries every six months. Contact Riley Hospital for Children (1-888-365-2022) for more information on flashing or vibrating alarm systems and other adapted fire safety equipment for your family.

- Make sure that children with disabilities are included in fire safety education at school and practice the information learned (in an adapted format if necessary) at home.
- Each month, practice escape routes from every room of your house with your child.
- Identify a person in your family who is responsible for helping your child with special needs escape in a fire. This person and a designated back up person should regularly practice making a safe escape with your child.
- Practice dialing 9-1-1 with your child and make sure there is a plan in place to convey emergency information.

Practice a family fire escape plan regularly.

