

Safety-Proofing Your Office

Claudia Anrig, DC

When chiropractors and their staff arrive at the office, they often go through a morning check-off list to prepare for the day. The practice checklist, however, rarely considers reviewing the office for safety precautions for children. Children under the age of five constitute the group that any office should be concerned about "practicing safety." Common injuries of children in this age group include choking, falls and poisoning.

When preparing to safety-proof your practice, begin with a walk-through evaluation. Start with your reception room and scan the room for objects that are at a height below four feet. One approach is to get down in a squatting position or on your hands and knees. View your office as a toddlers would. What is within their view and reach? Can lamps, art or educational objects be pulled down? Does any of your furniture have any low, sharp corners on which off-balance toddlers could strike their foreheads?

In the children's corner or toy box, are there any items that infants or toddlers might place in their mouth and choke? This could include crayons left out for older children. Scanning floors for dropped paper clips, staples or pen caps is another good safety check.

The bathroom should be reviewed for any cleaning agents that may be left in low cabinets. This includes many air fresheners. The office should also have a key for the bathroom in case a child gets locked inside. Better yet, create a policy so that parents always accompany their children to the rest room.

One general office policy is very simple: never leave a child unattended by a parent. This includes the reception room, rest room and adjusting room. Leaving children unattended increases the likelihood of injuries or mischief.

At the report of findings, our policy is for the doctor to inform parents that they are welcome to bring their children with them for appointments, but must bring the children into the adjusting room during the visit. If a parent attempts to leave a child in the reception room, the staff should gently remind the parent to please bring the child into the adjusting room.

Safety-proofing any office should also include an electrical review. Frayed or misplaced cords that kids may trip over are accidents waiting to happen. Exposed electrical outlets may be an invitation for a toddler to place mommy's keys into the "car ignition." Going to a Babies-R-Us or Toys-R-Us will provide the solution. While you are at the store purchasing wall outlet plugs, pick up cabinet door restrainers. These are good for any adjusting or therapy room cabinets that do not lock, preventing children from playing with the contents.

The adjusting tables need your attention, too. Numerous tables may present a potential hazard. Hi-lo and drop tables are potential problems. Small hands could be placed in mechanical areas, and children could hang from tables or try to run your tables during your absence.

All parents and children should receive a safety talk about the adjusting room. It should cover instruction about all tables. Inform patients that any mechanical/electrical tables should not be run

by a parent or viewed as a jungle gym for their children. Inform parents that they should not leave their children unsupervised in the room.

Our practice has taken a second step by creating a warning sign that we have laminated and posted on our tables. The two warnings that we post are: "Warning - this table has areas where your child should not place their hands, feet or limbs." A second posted notice reads: "Please do not sit or play on the adjustment table."

Other ideas to consider for your office include a first aid kit (with a lot of Band-Aids) and notices of emergency telephone numbers (such as poison control and ambulance services). Purchase a CPR/choking chart and place it in an area accessible to staff. Contact the Red Cross and offer a Saturday CPR class for your staff and patients.

Safety-proofing your office decreases the possibility of accidents and injury. Like chiropractic wellness care, prevention is the key.

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