

How to make your home safe for pets



Pets require certain comforts to live long and healthy lives. In addition to adequate nutrition, exercise, medical care, and mental stimulation, pets need a safe place to live.

The average home is filled with various items that can be harmful to pets. Just as parents baby-proof their homes when welcoming new children into their families, pet owners can take inventory of potential hazards to pets and take steps to safeguard their pets from home-related injuries.

A few simple adjustments around the house could prevent many pet emergencies.

- Invest in cabinet locks. Cats and dogs can be curious animals, gaining access to areas of a home pet owners never would have imagined possible. If you can't store everything beyond pets' reach, then use cabinet and drawer latches to prevent access to areas that are off limits. Lock doors to basements, garages and storage sheds as well.
- Cover all garbage cans. Animals have extraordinary senses of smell, and they may be attracted to trash cans around the house. Pets rooting around in the garbage can be messy, but this can also make pets vulnerable to illness. Invest in garbage cans with locks or tight lids to prevent food poisoning or choking.

- Use medications wisely. Be mindful of medications, making sure none of your pills fall on the floor where they can be gobbled up by pets.
- Protect belongings. Cats can scale many objects in the house, gaining access to areas of the house that dogs cannot reach. Cats also can be attracted to small shiny objects, such as jewelry or glass items, that are choking hazards. Store potential choking hazards out of sight of curious cats.
- Clean the furnace. Allergens and poor indoor air quality is not just a concern for humans. Pets also can be affected by allergies and health issues that result from exposure to mould or dirt in a home. Have your HVAC system routinely serviced and routinely change indoor air filters to maintain healthy air quality. When possible, open windows to let fresh air inside.
- Secure windows and doors. Cats and dogs may be distracted by something outdoors and feel compelled to chase after it. Dogs and cats can suffer serious injuries if they fall from windows. Make sure window screens are secure and install guards if your pet likes to hang out by the windows. Exercise caution when entering and leaving your home so pets don't scurry outside.
- Keep cords and electronic outlets secure. Teething puppies or curious cats

may bite or pull on power cords. Use cord keepers to cover up electric lines and outlet locks to keep plugs where they should be.

- Provide a comfortable indoor climate.

Many pets spend the majority of their days indoors where climate and temperature can be controlled. However, if yours is an outside pet or requires a brief stint in the garage or an unusu-

lated area, make sure the temperature in such areas is comfortable and safe. Take precautions around the house to keep pets safe, comfortable and secure. — MS



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