

# 14 Tips for a Healthy Family in 2014

*Katy Magazine* speaks to local parents and experts to bring Katy families our top 14 tips for 2014

*Written by Katy Magazine's Editors*

1



## Be a Fire Smart Family

Does your family know where to go and what to do if there is a fire or emergency? Pick a location (like a mailbox or a stop sign at the end of the street) where you will always meet if there is a house fire or other crisis. Teach children what smoke alarms sound like and what to do if they hear them. Also, remind them where the exits are and never to hide during a fire. Consider visiting a fire station and letting your kids meet real-life firefighters to see what their uniforms look like so they won't be afraid of them should they need to be rescued in an emergency.

2



## Know Names, Phone Numbers, and Addresses

Teach children to memorize their parents' phone numbers, street address, and names (not just "mom" and "dad"). As soon as children are verbal, they can learn this. Use fun, creative ways to teach them such as songs or by playing games. You can have them practice calling you and quiz them often to make sure they have the information correct.

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3



### Practice Hand Washing and Sneezing Basics

One of the easiest ways to avoid viral illness is to get your kids, and yourself, in the habit of washing hands before eating, sleeping, and after using the restroom - no exceptions. Young children often suck their thumbs or pick their nose at bedtime, so late night hand washing is important as well. Another great habit to teach is to sneeze into their elbow. Model these good habits, and your cuties will pick up on them in no time.

4



### Be Car Seat Savvy

Be informed about car seat safety for your child's age. About 70% of child safety seats are not installed properly. Certified technicians will inspect your car seat, often free of charge. Arrange a car safety check by visiting [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov). Car seats also have expiration dates and get recalled. Make sure a used car seat has never been in an accident, which can damage the structural integrity of the seat, and discard any seat over six years old.

Visit [seatcheck.org](http://seatcheck.org) for more tips

5



### Check Alarms: Smoke, Carbon, and Home

By the time most smoke detectors chirp in the middle of the night, the battery is already dead. Prevent problems by replacing smoke detector batteries every six months; consider setting a calendar event in your smart phone to remind you. It's also imperative to install carbon monoxide detectors near your family's sleeping areas. As for security systems, test them by setting off the alarm and seeing how/ if the company actually responds. Many Katy homeowners think their homes are monitored when in fact, they are not.

6



### Teach Children About Strangers

Without scaring your youngsters, talk openly about who is a stranger and who is not. For example, explain who is allowed to pick them up from school. Have regular conversations about basic rules such as never going anywhere with a stranger and what to do if a stranger approaches them. Teach your child to always follow the "buddy system" when playing outside or walking home from the bus stop. Teach your kids that strangers don't always look scary, and remind them to always ask a trusted adult if they are not sure.

7



### Always Be Road-ready

Create your own emergency kit for the car packed with necessities like bottled water, granola bars, a warm blanket, a flashlight with batteries, jumper cables, a rope, and first-aid kit. Have your mechanic check your car for regular maintenance, change the oil, brakes, and tires as needed. AAA offers roadside assistance - which includes any car you ride in - starting around \$50 per year. Visit [aaa.com](http://aaa.com). Make sure you are well rested before traveling for long periods of time. To avoid getting distracted, designate a passenger to be the radio "DJ" and cell phone answerer.

8



### Re-evaluate Home Hazards

Go through all medicine cabinets and remove/replace expired medications and lock up the rest from children and teens. Re-examine last year's childproofing areas. Has your child grown taller, learned to climb, or solved the mystery of that childproof lock? They may be able to access cabinets or shelves that contain dangers such as cleaning products, knives, tools, or other hazards. Re-evaluate your home to see if the childproofing is still age appropriate for your child's stage of development.



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9



Visit [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org) for free check-up calendars

### Don't Miss Pediatric and Dental Check-ups

Even if your child is healthy, follow your child's recommended pediatric and dental visits. These experts are trained to review a list of potential problems such as growth issues, developmental delays, neurological issues, vision, hearing, and much more. Regular check-ups even when your child isn't sick can save your family time and money in the long run. In addition, health-conscious kids are more likely to become health-conscious adults.

10



### Learn CPR and First Aid

Getting your CPR and first aid certification is easy and can be a life-saving investment. It's also vital to ensure businesses, churches, and schools have an automated external defibrillator (AED) machine in case of sudden cardiac arrest – the leading cause of death in the U.S. The AED machine delivers a shock to re-establish the heart's rhythm and helps save lives. Visit [nationalaedregistry.com](http://nationalaedregistry.com) to register your AED machine in the 911 database.

Visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) for CPR class info

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11



### Good Touch vs. Bad Touch

Teach your kids the correct names for their body parts. Explain that anything covered by a normal swimsuit is a "private part" and that no one is allowed to touch those areas. Tell your kiddos that they're the boss of their own bodies and have a right to say "stop" in a strong way if something is making them uncomfortable. The Kids Safety Council suggests that parents shouldn't force their child to hug a relative or friend if they don't wish to do so.

12



### Raise Car-smart Kids

Educate young children about how dangerous it is to be behind or near cars, play in driveways, or run across the street. Have family rules with regard to playing in or near cars, driveways, and streets. For older children, model and reiterate that seat belts must be worn before the car starts - period. Teach your kids that the trunk is not a safe hiding place. If your car has a trunk safety release button from the inside, show them how to use it in case of an emergency.

Visit [kidsandcars.org](http://kidsandcars.org) for more tips

13



### Insist on Bike Helmets

Emergency room physicians can tell you many horror stories of children who were badly injured or killed from not wearing a bike helmet. Don't let your child be one of them. Wearing a bike helmet is the single most effective way to reduce incidences of head injury and death from bike crashes. Practice this mantra: no helmet equals no bike. Inform your children about bike safety laws in Texas. It's not safe to give their friends a ride on their bicycle, as only one rider per saddle seat is legally allowed.

14



### Get Rid of Distractions

With all the distractions we parents have, it's very important to give our children our full attention so they know they are loved and adored. The best advice we can give is to truly be "in the moment" when your child is present. When you first see your child come home from school or in the morning, light up with a big smile so they know how much they mean to you. Make a pledge for 2014 to cut back on texting, Facebooking, or talking on the cell phone, and fill your time with hugs, kisses, cuddles, and conversations. Have a great year, Katy! KM