



A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

Summer 2011

## Take a Vision Break



Think to Blink. Blink slowly...Feel eyelids touching the lower lids. Repeat 10 times. Then, blink lightly and quickly 10 times. End with a relaxing temple massage

Refocus Your eyes. Focus on the farthest object in distance for 5-10 seconds. Blink and breathe. Then shift your vision back to the screen...refocus. Repeat 3 times

Stretch Your Eyes. Move eyes slowly and smoothly up, down, side to side, and diagonally. Repeat twice. Then move eyes clockwise and then counter clockwise in a smooth circle. Repeat twice

Rest Your Eyes. Close Eyes and cover with palms. Experience total darkness for 20-30 seconds. Take long, slow deep breaths. Then relax face, brow, and jaw. Do not squeeze eyelids shut.

## School Decorations Safety

Whether classroom decorations are being used to celebrate a holiday, showcase student achievement or reinforce a learning concept, proper school decorations safety is necessary to ensure that items intended to enhance the learning experience don't become hazardous for the students.

### Decorating Hazards

Even well-intentioned decorations could pose serious risks to students if used incorrectly. Possible hazards from decorations include:

**Fires:** Too much clutter on classroom or hallway walls can spread fires more quickly.

**Poisoning:** Some decorations may be made with toxic substances and could be hazardous if young students were to unwittingly taste them.

**Falls:** Items that are improperly secured may fall and injure students.

**Trips:** A classroom cluttered with decorations has more trip hazards for unwary students.

**Cuts:** Paper cuts are common from foil and paper decorations, while glass items could break into dangerous shards.

**Distractions:** While distracting decorations aren't likely to cause injuries, students' grades can suffer because they can't focus on their lessons.

## School Decorations Safety Tips

To minimize the risks of classroom decorations but still enjoy a fun, colorful atmosphere, teachers should put decorations up carefully and safely

## General Decorations Tips:

- Only use decorations in their intended fashion and read all display instructions before use.
- Do not block fire alarms, emergency signs or exits with decorations.
- Confine decorations to suitable spaces such as bulletin boards. Covering windows and ceilings with additional decorations increases the amount of combustible material in the classroom and increases fire risks.
- Never hang decorations from light fixtures, sprinkler heads, vents or radiators.
- Choose decorations with flame resistant coatings.
- Fasten flags, posters, papers and other decorations flat to the wall to minimize exposed edges that could cause cuts or increase fire risks.
- Fasten all items securely for their weight to reduce the risk that they may loosen and fall.
- When removing decorations, be sure to remove all strings, staples and other materials used to hold the decorations.
- Store decorations safely and out of reach of students.
- Do not allow students to climb on desks or other unsafe surfaces to help decorate.

## Holiday Decorations



- Most teachers decorate for different holidays. While they are beautiful, holiday decorations pose extra risks that need additional school decorations safety precautions. If using twinkle lights, always check cords for frays or bare wires.



- Fasten lights securely and do not permit dangling ends that could be choking risks.
- Do not leave lighted decorations on when not in the classroom, especially at night.
- Use only shatterproof, unbreakable decorative items.
- Avoid candy-like decorations that may be a tempting treat for younger students.
- Never use candles or any other decorations with exposed heating elements.
- Avoid fake snow for winter holiday decorations because it may irritate the lungs when sprayed and could pose a toxic hazard.

## Additional Safe Learning Environment Tips

However a teacher chooses to decorate the classroom, there are other basic safety tips that can help make it a safe learning environment that students can enjoy without injury risks.

- Keep desks spaced evenly with enough walking room in aisles.
- Keep floors clear of debris/trip hazards.
- Be sure shelves and bulletin boards are securely fastened to the wall.
- Make sure all lighting fixtures operate properly for adequate illumination.
- Post safety information including courtesy rules, evacuation routes and other guidelines clearly.

By following basic school decorations safety tips teachers and students can enjoy the beauty of different decorations while minimizing hazards.

## Proper Lifting Techniques

Improper lifting technique can lead to back, leg and arm pain. Poor technique can cause both acute injury, and serious chronic effects. Learning the right way to lift will help you avoid these problems.

1. **Plan ahead before lifting.** Knowing what you're doing and where you're going will prevent you from making awkward movements while holding something heavy. Clear a path, and if lifting something with another person, make sure both of you agree on the plan.
2. **Lift close to your body.** You will be a stronger, and stable lifter if the object is held close to your body rather than at the end of your reach. Make sure you have a firm hold on the object you are lifting, and keep it balanced close to your body.
3. **Feet shoulder width apart.** A solid base of support is important while lifting. Holding your feet too close together will be unstable, too far apart will hinder movement. Keep the feet about shoulder width apart and take short steps.
4. **Bend your knees and keep your back straight.** Practice the lifting motion before you lift the object, and think about your motion before you lift. Focus on keeping your spine straight--raise and lower to the ground by bending your knees.
5. **Tighten your stomach muscles.** Tightening your abdominal muscles will hold your back in a good lifting position and will help prevent excessive force on the spine.
6. **Lift with your legs.** Your legs are many times stronger than your back muscles--let your strength work in your favor. Again, lower to the ground by bending your knees, not your back. Keeping your eyes focused upwards helps to keep your back straight.

7. **If you're straining, get help.** If an object is too heavy, or awkward in shape, make sure you have someone around who can help you lift.

## More Tips:

1. **Never bend your back to pick something up.** It's just not worth the damage that improper lifting technique can cause.
2. **Hold the object close to your body.** You are a much more stable lifter if you're not reaching for an object.
3. **Don't twist or bend.** Face in the direction you are walking. If you need to turn, stop, turn in small steps, and then continue walking.
4. **Keep your eyes up.** Looking slightly upwards will help you maintain a better spine position.

## Office Safety Tips

Being aware of hazards and learning office safety will help to prevent accidents. Slips/falls are the most frequent cause of injuries, and people working in an office or classroom are twice as likely to be injured by falling than in other types of workplaces. Keeping alert and thinking ahead can help minimize the risk. **Use Some Common Sense**

- Sit upright in your chair, with your feet touching the floor when you're working at your desk. Before sitting down, look to make sure your chair is beneath you and hasn't rolled away.
- Look where you're going whenever you're walking around the office.
- If you carry anything from one place to another, don't stack things up so high that you can't see directly in front of you.
- Walk, don't run.
- Go slowly if the floor is wet or slippery.
- Don't read while walking.
- Hold the handrail when using stairs.
- Only open one drawer in a filing cabinet at a time to keep it from tipping over.
- Close desk or file cabinet drawers before walking away.
- Store supplies inside of cabinets or bookcases, and place heavier items in the lower shelves.
- Immediately wipe up spilled beverages, water tracked in by wet shoes.. Ask a custodian to do the cleaning if you don't have time to do it.
- Obey the no smoking rules, and don't throw matches, ashes or cigarette butts into regular trash.
- Keep the floors and aisles clear of electrical cords. Use surge protectors and cable ties to manage the wiring.
- Refrain from eating or drinking at a computer station. Spills and crumbs could get into the keyboard and cause malfunctions.
- Don't touch electrical outlets, plugs nor switches with wet hands.

