



## Six Lifesaving Furniture Safety Tips

Emmy Award-winning consumer advocate Elisabeth Leamy offers easy steps you can take today to reduce potential home hazards

October 7, 2024 – When we buy furniture, we look for style and comfort, but once it’s in our homes, it’s important to consider safety, too, especially with kids around.

That’s where **National Furniture Safety Week** comes in. Sponsored by [Alliance4Safety](#), the October 7-11 campaign was created to raise awareness of key precautions every family should take to ensure a safer home.

After all, we spend *hours* relaxing on our favorite furniture, so it makes sense to spend a few *minutes* on furniture safety. Here’s what you need to know:

✓ **Secure your furniture to prevent tip-over tragedies.** The [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) says thousands of children are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year due to furniture tip-overs – and furniture tip-overs killed nearly 200 children between 2000 and 2023. If it has shelves, doors or drawers, you need to anchor it to the wall. Period. Kids are often tempted to climb things like bureaus and bookcases – and even small, lightweight furniture can fall over. Chests as short as 27 inches have toppled and killed children, so never assume a piece is too short or sturdy to tip. Since September 2023, chests and dressers have had to meet a new federal stability standard, but you should still anchor them to the wall for maximum safety. New clothing storage furniture comes with free furniture anchors for this purpose. Use them!

To secure furniture that you already own, you can find furniture anchors at hardware or home-improvement stores. These anchors are inexpensive and easy to install. You don’t even need a drill – you can use a hammer and nail to make holes for the anchors.

And if you’re not sure what type of anchor to purchase, go to [www.AnchorIt.gov](http://www.AnchorIt.gov), where you’ll find advice on the right kind of anchor for your walls and step-by-step instructions plus a video demonstrating how to install them.

**UPDATE:** Some furniture anchors made in Vietnam and included with furniture manufactured prior to November 2019 have been recalled, because they can become brittle and break. To see if you have one of these recalled anchors, go to [Alliance4Safety](#), where you can order replacements at no charge.

Furniture anchors are the most important strategy to avoid tip-overs, but there are additional easy steps you can take:

- Store heavier items down low so taller pieces aren't top-heavy.
- Don't put toys or treats on top of furniture where kids can see but not reach them, which might tempt them to climb.

### ✓ **Wall-mount or secure TVs on a sturdy base.**

For flat screens, the safest strategy is proper wall-mounting according to the manufacturer instructions. This is the best choice if you have small children at home or kids who visit frequently. Just be sure to purchase a wall-mount kit designed to hold the size and weight of your television.

If you cannot wall-mount your TV, be sure to choose a low, sturdy cabinet and secure the TV to the wall or to the furniture with a TV anchor. TV anchors are different from furniture tip restraints. Specialized TV anchors feature nylon straps or steel cables that connect to the back of your television, then attach to the wall or to the furniture itself.

Most important, never place TVs on furniture that was not built to hold electronics.

### ✓ **Buy upholstered furniture made with certified foam.**

We all want our homes to be safe *and* healthy. By now you have probably heard of the tiny-but-mighty nonprofit that has certified the polyurethane foam used in mattresses for more than 15 years. But did you know that the [CertiPUR-US program](#) also certifies the foam used in sofas and upholstered chairs? Choose upholstered furniture that is made with CertiPUR-US certified foam so that you know the foam has been screened for chemicals that can harm human health or contribute to poor indoor air quality. We're talking about things like formaldehyde, ozone depleters, carcinogenic flame retardants, mercury, lead and other heavy metals plus phthalates regulated by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. CertiPUR-US even conducts random verification inspections to make sure participating foam producers continue to comply with the group's rigorous standards.

Whether you are shopping for mattresses, pillows, sofas and sectionals, upholstered chairs and recliners, youth furniture and play cushions or even pet beds, you can check the CertiPUR-US directory to see if the manufacturer or retailer sells products containing certified foam. Unfortunately, there are companies that have been known to use the logo without permission or verification, so use the group's [handy online directory](#) or mobile app as you shop to confirm that a company currently participates in the program.

### ✓ **Monitor your children around recliners and lift chairs.**

Reclining furniture is fabulous for adults and fascinating to children, especially if it has power features. Unfortunately, these coveted seats can also cause unanticipated hazards. That's why it's important to keep an eye on children and pets in rooms with reclining furniture. Don't let kids play on recliners or toy around with the buttons or remotes for powerized features. The most common recliner injury is pinched limbs or fingers when the footrest is closed. That's why we should all get in the habit of returning recliners to the upright and closed position when not in use.

Less common but more troubling are incidents in which toddlers climbed under a lift chair or recliner while an adult was seated and were injured or even killed when the footrest was lowered. Again, the best practice is to know the whereabouts of small children and pets before closing a recliner or lowering a lift chair.

✓ **Follow bunk bed safety precautions.** Bunk beds are a blast – and a space saver. If you don't have them at home, you might find them in a vacation rental. But keep this strict safety advice in mind: The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission says children under 6 should never use the top bunk, because half of all bunk bed-related injuries occur to children under 6 according to [Nationwide Children's Hospital](#). Even older kids should be reminded not to jump from or play on the top bunk. Discourage horse play and also make sure the bunk's ladder or stair is securely fastened.

You will also want to make sure that any bunk bed is manufactured to meet current safety standards, which may mean skipping hand-me-downs or yard-sale finds. Bunk beds must have railings on both sides of the top bunk that extend 5 inches or more above the mattress. In addition, decorative finials or extensions of bed posts on the top bunk are not allowed under current safety standards, because they can be a strangulation hazard. Bunk beds must display a specific warning label that is visible to the user (usually placed on the bottom of the top bunk). In addition to the manufacturer contact information, this label provides instructions on the proper size and thickness of the mattress for that specific bunk.

✓ **Be aware of glass tabletop risks.** Believe it or not, [2.5 million people](#) – most commonly children under 7 and adults in their early 20s – injure themselves on broken glass tabletops each year. Beyond simple common sense – like not allowing children to play on or around glass-top tables and never, ever standing on a glass-top table for any reason – there is only one key safety precaution for reducing accidents and injuries: Make sure the top is tempered glass.

Tempered glass is stronger and safer than non-tempered or "sheet" glass. Tempered glass is less likely to break and, if it does, it shatters into small pieces rather than dangerous and jagged shards. To find out if a glass tabletop in your home is tempered, check the edge or a corner. Most manufacturers mark tempered glass with a "T" or even stamp it with the code for the glass safety standard, which is ASTM F2813-18. Not finding a label? Grab a pair of polarized sunglasses! If the

glass is tempered, you will see a distinctive grid pattern on it that does not appear on regular glass.

Tempered glass is even more important for outdoor glass tables because exposure to extreme temperatures and damaging weather can cause glass to shatter.

There are many safety standards that apply to today's home furnishings. But it's still possible for non-compliant products to find their way into consumers' homes. Knowing what's required – along with additional precautions you can take to prevent accidents – will help ensure your home sweet home is a safer home.

Find additional furniture safety guidance at <https://alliance4safety.org/>.