

## Is Your Smoke Detector Working?

Does your home have at least one smoke detector? If not, your local fire department may offer them at low or no cost. And most hardware or home supply stores carry smoke detectors and batteries.

Wait! Even if you answered yes, you're not done yet. The second question is: when was the last time you checked to make sure the smoke detectors in your home are still *working*?

If the battery has failed or been removed, your smoke detector can't help you and your loved ones escape a fire.

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, smoke detectors can reduce the risk of death from residential fires by as much as 50% yet an estimated one-third of American households do not have a working smoke detector installed. Two-thirds of home fires that kill children under age 5 happen in a home without a working smoke detector, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

You should have at least one smoke detector in your home, located near where you sleep. According to the U.S. Fire Administration's Fact Sheet on Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers, smoke detectors are most effective when you:

- install a smoke detector on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas;
- test your smoke detector monthly;
- replace the batteries at least once a year. Your fire department may recommend changing batteries twice a year, using Daylight Savings Time to remember to change all batteries when you change your clocks. Smoke detectors with 10-year batteries are also available. These should be tested monthly just as should other smoke detectors;
- do not remove the batteries without replacing them promptly with fresh batteries. As reported in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, in a study of households which had received smoke detectors three or four years earlier found that 76% of those now without a *working* smoke detector were due to missing or disconnected batteries;
- teach all members of the household to leave as soon as the alarm goes off – and *stay* outside;
- plan your fire escape routes from every part of your home. Your plan should include which individual in your household will be responsible for making sure everyone else is "up and out";
- practice your fire escape routes at least twice a year;
- have a designated meeting spot outside of your home.

You can download the U.S. Fire Administration's Parent's Guide to Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers, and a Fact Sheet in English or in Spanish, at [www.usfaparents.gov](http://www.usfaparents.gov)

For more fire prevention tips from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/fire.htm#prevention>