

ALTER for Child Safety:

A Program To Improve Caregiver's Safety Practices at Home

ALTER is the primary tool used in the Supervising for Home Safety program - an evidence-based program designed to reduce young children's (1-5 years) injuries in the home by improving caregiver safety practices. Evaluations show the program works and positive effects on parent behaviors persist at least 1 year later.

The program involves presenting video-based messaging to caregivers about four common types of home injuries affecting young children (i.e., drowning, falls, burns, poisoning). Extensive research with caregivers guided the content, design and production aspects of these video vignettes. The vignettes vary in their depiction of diversity, the presence of fathers as well as mothers, and the presence of siblings. Each video is about 1-3 minutes and poses questions to parent viewers throughout in order to promote their thinking about home hazards and the impact of children's development on injury risk.

The program introduces caregivers to a flexible approach to reducing injury risk that is based on the mnemonic ALTER (see below). The merit of such flexibility is that it allows caregivers to tailor their prevention approach to meet their own individual needs and preferences, avoiding prescriptive messages (e.g., "caregivers should...") that caregivers often reject. Tailoring is important because it has been shown to improve effectiveness of interventions.

A manual guides delivery of the program and indicates: what materials are needed; what activities are to be delivered; key points to cover, including any specific wording to use; anticipated issues that might arise in discussion and ways to address these. The program has proven effective in one:one delivery (e.g., home visiting) and in group delivery (see references below).

The mnemonic ALTER provides caregivers a tool to facilitate problem solving to reduce risk of injury for their child. It can be applied to a broad range of home situations and types of injury risks.

-
- A** = change your **ACTIVITY** or that of your child (e.g., have child help you; switch child to a low-injury risk activity if you cannot watch continuously)
L = change your **LOCATION** or that of your child (e.g., fold laundry where s/he is playing; bring your phone into the bathroom so you can stay there while they take their bath)
T = change the **TIMING** of what you want to do (e.g., do it when your child sleeps)
E = modify the **ENVIRONMENT** to reduce risk of injury (e.g., secure bookcases, lock cupboards, put medicine out of sight and reach)
R = use your **RESOURCES** (e.g., who can help you by watching your child – a friend, spouse)
-

Morrongiello, B. A., Zdzieborski, D., Sandomierski, M., & Munroe, K. (2013). Results of a randomized controlled trial (RCT) the efficacy of the *Supervising for Home Safety* program: Impact on supervision practices. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 50, 587-595.

Morrongiello, B.A., Hou, S., Bell, M., Walton, K., A. J. Filion, & Haines, J. (2017). *Supervising for Home Safety* Program: A randomized controlled trial testing community-based group delivery. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 42(7), 2017, 768– 778.