

## ***How accidents happen***

Small children can become entangled in hanging cords with loop ends when playing, climbing or exploring. If they try to sit down, or fall or topple off a chair, they could hang themselves with the loop.

The cord or chain used to open and close the blind could also strangle a child.

These types of tragedies are all too frequent, both in Ireland and around the world. However, making your curtains and blinds safe for children can be cheap and easy.

## ***For existing blinds or curtains...***

You can make old blinds or curtains safe by keeping the following points in mind:

- Cords ending in a loop are particularly risky. Cut the cord to get rid of the loop and install tassels
- Do not knot or tie the ends together after cutting the cord – this creates a new loop in which a child could become entangled
- The cords should end at least 1.6 metres (5 feet 3 inches) above the ground so children cannot reach them
- Replace cords with curtain or blind wands, but avoid possible eye injuries by making sure children cannot reach them
- Where cords cannot be cut, a tie down or tension device can be used to pull the cord tight and secure it to the floor or wall

- Never put a cot, bed, high chair or playpen near a window or patio door where a child can reach a curtain or blind cord
- Keep sofas, chairs, tables, shelves or bookcases away from windows to prevent children climbing up and reaching curtain or blind cords

## ***When buying new blinds or curtains...***

A new safety standard for blinds and curtains is in place since 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2009.

"Irish Standard I.S. EN13120 - Internal blinds - Performance requirements including safety" is aimed at eliminating strangulation hazards to young children by blind cords.

When purchasing blinds:

- Ask the shop if the blind has been manufactured in accordance with the standard
- Check to see if a warning notice is on the blind
- A device for keeping cords, chains, tape or similar out of the reach of children should be provided with the blind, or the product should be designed so any mechanism does not pose a strangulation risk
- Ask the supplier to demonstrate the product's safe use

When buying blinds, ask if the documentation relating to their assembly, safe installation, use and maintenance is provided.

Make sure that the person fitting the blind follows the manufacturer's instructions.

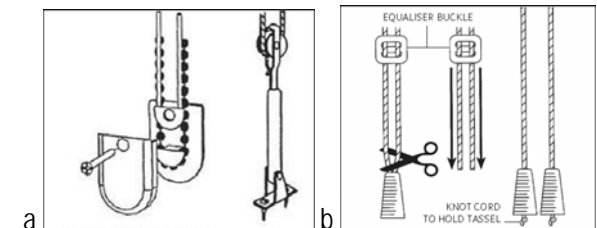
Once installed, always follow the precautions listed previously for existing blinds.

## ***Vertical blinds...***

There are several simple steps you can take to minimise risk - and help keep your child safe.

A special tie-down device can be used for vertical blinds with continuous loop cords.

The following are illustrations of the type of solutions that may be employed - seek advice from you local blinds/curtain shop or hardware store.



*a: A special tie-down device can be used for vertical blinds with continuous loop cords*

*b: Knotting or tying the cords together after cutting the loop is NOT recommended, as this creates a new loop in which a child could become entangled.*

If using one of the solutions overleaf you should ensure that the blind will continue to operate if adjusted.

### Inner cords

Inner cords on horizontal blinds can form a loop that can be fatal to infants and toddlers. Most modern blinds have attachments or inter-looping stitched cords so that inner cords can't form a loop if pulled by a young child. You can check your blinds by gently pulling on the inner cords of the blind to see how much slack is created or what sized loop is formed. If you are concerned you should contact your manufacturer or supplier.

### Word of caution

If you follow and act on these tips, it should help to protect your child from possible serious harm. You should be aware, however, that all risks cannot be eliminated. The new standard refers to this. Ultimately persons in charge of children are responsible for following the safety instructions provided by the manufacturer. The complete elimination of the strangulation risk can only be achieved by keeping cords, chains, tapes and similar out of the reach of children. Use of additional safety devices may reduce the risk of strangulation but cannot be considered risk proof. Motorisation eliminates the risk associated with looped and pull-cord operating mechanisms but the risk relating to inner tapes and cords (for relevant products) remains. **The information provided is intended as a guide only; you should contact your supplier with any queries regarding the safety of your blinds.**

*The National Consumer Agency and the NSAI have worked together in producing this leaflet.*

### Who we are...

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The **National Consumer Agency** has responsibility for alerting consumers to non food product safety issues and ensuring that manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers place safe products on the market.

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**NSAI** (National Standards Authority of Ireland) is Ireland's official standards body. Its work entails serving industry and protecting consumer interests by setting standards and through the certification of quality and safety of services.



putting consumers first



# Consumer Guide to the Safety of Window Blinds



Your home should be a place where your children are safe and protected, but it can harbour many unforeseen dangers.

The cords of window blinds and curtains pose a particular risk to children. Babies and young children, particularly those under the age of three, can be injured or strangled by cord loops on roller blinds, venetian blinds or vertical blinds.