

## Preventing Infant Accidents

As babies learn and explore their world, accidents will happen. To prevent a severe accident, you need to make your home safe for your child. There are six main accidents babies face as they grow up:

- Car crashes
- Falls
- Choking and suffocation
- Poisoning
- Burns
- Drowning

This handout describes how your child may be prone to each of these hazards and how you can help prevent a severe accident.

### Choking and Suffocation

Choking is a common accident among infants. Babies have natural grasping and sucking reflexes. Older infants begin to reach for objects and try to put them in their mouths.

Keep small objects out of baby's reach (no small objects on tabletops or lower shelves, etc.). Risky objects include pins, bottle caps, nails, and tacks.

Toys should be large, smooth, and painted with non-toxic paint. Toys should not have small parts that can be snapped off and swallowed. Also, be careful that older children's toys stay out of your baby's reach. Take toys out of the crib before your baby falls asleep. Remove the bumpers from around the crib.

Babies should sleep on their back. This may reduce the chances of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).

Keep drapes, cords, and plastic away from infants to prevent them from being strangled or suffocated.

### Falls

Falls from changing tables, cribs, highchairs, and infant seats are common. Babies squirm, roll, creep, and pull to a standing position. After about 6 months, they will try to walk while holding on to something and then alone. Soon they will try to climb up and crawl under furniture.

Never leave an infant alone. Babies, even newborns, can squirm enough to get to the edge of a table, couch, or bed and fall off. They can even wiggle out of a highchair.

Your baby should always be buckled when sitting in a car, bouncy seat, swing, or highchair.

Keep the sides of your infant's crib raised.

Keep a hand on your baby if you need to turn away when changing or bathing your baby.

Provide a closed, safe space for your baby to wander in.

Put safety gates across the top and bottom of stairs.

Clean spills up right away to prevent falls. Be careful while walking on slippery floors or sidewalks. Accidents can happen while carrying a baby.

Throw away any walkers on wheels. There are many cases of children falling downstairs in these.

## **Car Crashes**

Infants are too small to be protected by seat belts. Also, an adult cannot protect a baby that they are holding on to during a car crash.

Always use a car seat, even for “quick trips.” Be sure the seat is strapped to the car and the infant strapped in the seat. The back seat of the car is safer for your child. Infant and child car seats should not be in the front seat if there is an airbag on the passenger side. Infants, birth to 12 months, should be in rear-facing car seats.

## **Burns**

Burns in young children are often caused by spilled hot liquids, ovens, heaters, and fires. By 6 months, infants are old enough to turn on faucets. They can move very quickly.

Turn down the water heater to 120°-130° so that scalding water does not come out. Turn cold water on first, then hot. Test water first before you put your baby in it.

Turn pot handles toward the center of the stove. Use back burners when you can.

Always keep infants a safe distance from stoves, hot food, coffee cups, hot plates, and from your cooking. Never handle hot items or liquids while holding the baby.

Keep ashtrays, lighted cigarettes, cigars, pipes, matches, and lighters out of baby’s reach.

Put screens or doors in front of fireplaces. Be sure coals from a fire are cool before you leave them unattended.

Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide monitors (at least one on each floor.)

Be prepared to escape from a fire in your house. Have two escape routes out of your home. In case of fire, get everyone out of the house first, then call 911.

Cover electric outlets with safety caps.

Anchor cords so that an infant cannot pull them up and put them in his mouth. Make sure no wires are exposed.

## **Poisoning**

Infants will try to put all sorts of things in their mouths.

Put household poisons in a locked cupboard. Move harmful products high out of the infant’s sight and reach. Plan ahead before your baby starts to climb.

Keep the phone number of your doctor, poison center, ambulance, and emergency room near the phone. If your baby does consume poison, call your local poison center or emergency room right away for advice.

Always store harmful products in their original bottles. If you must change bottles, label the new one. Never use food containers to store harmful products.

## **Harmful Household Items**

- Medicines and vitamins
- Makeup
- Nail polish
- Hair products
- Deodorants
- Cleaning products
- Moth balls
- Fertilizer and weed killers
- Pesticides
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Toilet water
- Paint, paint thinners and removers

- Fuel oils
- Gasoline
- Kerosene

### **Harmful Items that Will also Burn Mouth, Esophagus, and Stomach**

- Ammonia
- Detergent
- Disinfectants
- Oven cleaner
- Lye
- Drain cleaner
- Dishwasher soap
- Toilet bowl cleaner

### **Drowning**

Babies can fall over, even if they can sit well. As babies get older (6-12 months), they don't sit still. Keep this in mind when bathing your infant or playing with your infant in a wading pool.

Never leave an infant alone in a bathtub or near any water. Ignore phones and doorbells. Hold your infant securely with one hand and wash with the other. Non-skid mats are helpful.

Never leave a bathtub full of water unattended. Empty buckets when done using them.

Keep toilet bowls closed.

### **Other Cautions**

Keep objects out of reach that can cut your child: knives, glass, cans, sharp objects (toys or furniture with sharp edges, and broken toys).

### **Who to Call**

Poison Control  
**1-800-222-1222**