

Safety & Accidents – Top Tips for Parents/Carers

All information taken from the NHS website. For more information see:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/baby-safety-tips/>



Healthy Early Years Partnership

Choking

- Food is the most common thing for babies and toddlers to choke on. Young children may also put small objects in their mouths that could cause choking.
- Raw jelly cubes can be a choking hazard for babies and young children. If you're making jelly from raw jelly cubes, make sure you always follow the manufacturers' instructions.
- If you give your baby a bottle, always hold the bottle and your baby while they're feeding.
- Keep small objects, such as buttons, coins and small toy parts, out of your baby's reach.
- Once your baby has started on solid food, always cut it up into small pieces. Babies can choke on something as small as a grape (these should be cut lengthways).
- Don't give young children hard foods, such as boiled sweets or whole nuts.
- Keep small, silver button batteries well away from small children. As well as being a choking hazard, they can cause severe internal burns if swallowed.
- Stay with your child when they're eating. Encourage them to sit still while they eat, as running around while eating could make them choke.
- Keep toys designed for older children away from babies and toddlers, as they may have small parts.

Suffocation

- Don't use pillows or duvets with babies under the age of one, as they can suffocate if their face gets smothered. They won't be able to push the duvet away.
- If you carry your baby in a sling, follow the TICKS advice to reduce the risk of suffocation. Keep your baby **T**ight, **I**n view, **C**lose enough to kiss, **K**eep their chin off their chest, with a **S**upported back.
- Keep plastic bags, including nappy bags, out of reach and sight of young children. Keep them away from babies' cots, so that they can't reach them and put them over their nose and mouth.

Strangulation

- Don't tie a dummy to your baby's clothes, as the tie or ribbon could strangle them.
- Always keep curtain or blind cords tied up out of reach – with a cleat hook for example – so that they're well out of your baby or toddler's reach.
- Don't leave any type of rope or cord lying around, including dressing gown cords and drawstring bags.
- If the gaps between banisters or balcony railings are more than 6.5cm (2.5 inches) wide, cover them with boards or safety netting. Small babies may be able to squeeze their bodies through, but not their heads.
- Keep toys and garden play equipment well away from washing lines, so that children can't stand on them and reach the line.
- Avoid using cot bumpers in your baby's cot – they are a hazard for choking, suffocation and strangulation

Falls in babies

- Babies soon learn to wriggle and kick. It's not long before they can roll over, which means that they can roll off beds and changing tables.
- Here are some things you can do to stop your baby being injured:
 - Change your baby's nappy on a changing mat on the floor.

- Don't leave your baby unattended on a bed, sofa or changing table, even for a second, as they could roll off.
- Always keep bouncing cradles or baby car seats on the floor, rather than on a table or kitchen worktop, as your baby's wriggling could tip it over the edge.
- Hold on to the handrail when carrying your baby up and down stairs, in case you trip. Make sure the stairs are free of toys and other trip hazards.
- If you get your baby a walker, make sure it complies with British Standard BS EN 1273: 2005. Older walkers may tip over more easily and harm your baby.
- Watch where you're putting your feet while carrying your baby. It's easy to trip over something like a toy.
- Use a five-point harness to secure your baby in a highchair or pram every time you put them in.
- When your baby starts crawling
 - Fit safety gates to stop your baby getting onto stairs. Close the gates properly after you go through them.
 - If the gaps between banisters or balcony railings are more than 6.5cm (2.5 inches) wide, cover them with boards or safety netting.
 - Keep low furniture away from windows. Have windows fitted with locks or safety catches that restrict the opening to less than 6.5cm (2.5 inches), to stop babies climbing out. Make sure adults know where the keys are kept in case of a fire.
 - Remove cot toys and cot bumpers, as a baby can climb on them and may fall out of the cot.

Falls in toddlers

- When babies start to walk, they're unsteady on their feet, but can move very quickly. They tend to trip and fall.
- Here are some injury prevention tips for parents of toddlers:
 - Carry on using safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs until your infant is at least two years old.
 - Start to teach your child how to climb stairs, but never let them go up and down on their own (even four year olds may need some help).
 - Don't let children under six sleep in the top bunk of a bunk bed, as they can easily fall out.
 - Keep low furniture away from windows and ensure that windows are fitted with locks or safety catches. Make sure adults know where the keys are kept in case of fire.
 - Carry on using a five-point harness when your child is in their highchair or pushchair.
 - Keep scissors, knives and razors out of children's reach.
 - Special devices can stop doors from closing properly, preventing your child's fingers getting trapped. At night, remember to close doors to stop any potential fires from spreading.
 - If furniture has sharp corners, use corner protectors to prevent your child from hurting their head.

Poisoning

- Medicines are the cause of over 70% of hospital admissions for poisoning in under-fives. Common painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen are the main culprits. Keep all medicines locked away or high up out of reach and sight.
- Keep cleaning products high up out of reach, including those for the toilet. If this isn't possible, fit safety catches to low cupboard doors. Choose cleaning products that contain a bittering agent. This makes them taste nasty, so children are less likely to swallow them.
- Make sure bottle tops and lids are always firmly closed when not in use. Remember that child-resistant packaging is not child-proof - it just slows children down.

- Keep e-cigarettes and their refills out of sight and reach of babies and toddlers. Nicotine is poisonous and can be very dangerous for young children.
- Check your garden for poisonous plants. Teach your children not to eat anything they pick outdoors until they've checked with an adult.

Burns and Scalds

- A baby's skin burns more easily than an adult's. This means you need to take extra care to avoid burns and scalds.
 - At bathtime, run cold water into the bath first, then add some hot. Check the temperature with your elbow before your child gets in, and stay with them the whole time they are in the bath.
 - Babies and toddlers will grab at brightly coloured objects, such as mugs. If you're having a hot drink, put it down before you hold your baby. Keep hot drinks well away from all young children. A hot drink can still scald 15 minutes after it was made.
 - After warming a bottle of formula, shake the bottle well and test the temperature by placing a few drops on the inside of your wrist before feeding. It should feel lukewarm, not hot.
 - Avoid heating up bottles of formula in a microwave. Use a bottle warmer or jug of hot water instead.
 - Toddlers will play with anything they can reach, so keep matches and lighters out of young children's sight and reach.
 - Use a kettle with a short or curly flex to stop it hanging over the edge of the work surface, where it could be grabbed.
 - When cooking, use the rings at the back of the cooker and turn saucepan handles towards the back, so they can't be grabbed by little fingers.
 - When you've finished using your iron or hair straighteners, put them out of reach while they cool down. Make sure your child can't grab the flex while you're using them.
 - Keep button batteries well away from babies and small children, as they can cause severe internal burns if swallowed.

Drowning

- Babies can drown in as little as 5cm (2 inches) of water. Drowning is one of the commonest causes of child death – it's often silent, so you won't necessarily hear any noise or struggle.
 - Baths are the commonest place for babies and young children to drown. Stay with your baby or toddler the whole time they're in the bath. Never leave them for a moment, even if there's an older brother or sister in the bath with them.
 - If you use a bath seat, remember that it's not a safety device. You still need to stay with your baby all the time.
 - Empty the bath as soon as you've taken your child out.
 - If you have a garden pond, fence it off, fill it in or securely cover it.
 - Watch toddlers when they're in a paddling pool or playing near water. Empty the paddling pool straight after use.
 - Make sure your garden is secure so that your child can't get into neighbouring gardens, where there may be ponds or other drowning hazards.

House Fires

- Domestic fires are a significant risk to children. Smoke from a fire can kill a child in a few minutes. Chip pans and cigarettes are the most common causes.
- Never fill a chip pan more than one-third full of oil, or get a deep fat fryer instead. If a chip pan does catch fire, switch off the hob, leave the room, close the door and call the fire brigade.

- Extinguish and dispose of cigarettes, cigars and pipes carefully, particularly at night or if you are tired.
- Fit smoke alarms on every level of your home. Test them every week and change the batteries every year.
- At night, switch off electrical items before you go to bed and close all doors to contain a potential fire.
- Work out an escape plan for your family and tell your children what to do in case of a fire. Practise the plan regularly.
- If you have an open fireplace, always use a fireguard that encloses the whole fireplace and make sure it's attached to the wall. Don't place anything on it or hang things from it.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.

Glass related injuries

- Broken glass can cause serious cuts. The following advice may help you keep your child safe.
 - Use safety glass at a low level, such as in doors and windows. This shatters less easily than normal glass. Look for the British Standards (BS) kitemark.
 - Make existing glass safer by applying a shatter-resistant film.
 - When buying furniture that includes glass, make sure it has the BS kitemark.
 - Always dispose of broken glass quickly and safely – wrap it in newspaper before throwing it in the bin.
 - If you own a greenhouse or cold frame (a structure to protect plants from the winter cold), make sure it has safety glazing or is fenced off from children.
 - Don't let a baby or toddler hold anything made of glass.

Sun Safety for children

- Exposing your child to too much sun may increase their risk of skin cancer later in life.
- Sunburn can also cause considerable pain and discomfort in the short term.
- That's why babies and children need to have their skin protected between March and October in the UK.
 - Encourage your child to play in the shade – for example, under trees – especially between 11am and 3pm, when the sun is at its strongest.
 - Keep babies under the age of six months out of direct sunlight, especially around midday.
 - Cover exposed parts of your child's skin with sunscreen, even on cloudy or overcast days. Use one that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or above and is effective against UVA and UVB. Don't forget to apply it to their shoulders, nose, ears, cheeks, and the tops of their feet. Reapply often throughout the day.
 - Be especially careful to protect your child's shoulders and the back of their neck when they're playing, as these are the most common areas for sunburn.
 - Cover your child up in loose cotton clothes, such as an oversized T-shirt with sleeves.
 - Get your child to wear a floppy hat with a wide brim that shades their face and neck.
 - Protect your child's eyes with sunglasses that meet the British Standard (BSEN 1836:2005) and carry the CE mark – check the label.
 - If your child is swimming, use a waterproof sunblock of factor 15 or above. Reapply after towelling.

Teaching your child to stay safe

- Children under three can't always understand or remember safety advice, so they need to have an adult nearby at all times.
- From the age of three, children can start learning how to do things safely, but will sometimes forget, especially if they're excited or distracted.

- Even if they repeat your instructions back to you, they may not have understood them or be able to follow the instructions all the time.
- Children copy other people. If you, your family or their friends do risky things, they'll think it's acceptable and normal.
- Tell your child that if they feel uncomfortable and are being told to do something silly or dangerous, it's fine to say no. Encourage them to talk to you if this happens.
- Even young children can be taught ways to help keep them safe. It's a good idea to:
 - teach your child their surname as early as you can
 - teach them their address as soon as they're old enough to remember it
 - teach them what 999 means and how to call it, especially if you have epilepsy, diabetes, you're blind or you have a condition that means they may need to call for help (you may need to teach them what the number "9" looks like).
 - teach them to stay where they are if they get lost (for example, when you're out shopping) and to tell a mummy who has other children with them; this is safer than telling them not to talk to adults at all and risking them wandering off

Car Seats & Child Car Safety

- When buying a car seat, it's best to try a few in your car before making a decision. Try to find a retailer who is willing to help you with this. Ask whether staff have been trained in fitting car seats.
- Check whether your car has Isofix connectors built into it. These are designed to make fitting baby and child car seats simpler. Most modern family cars have them. They may be hidden in the cracks between the padding of your car seats.
- Some car seat manufacturers have online guides showing which cars their seats will fit in. If your baby is likely to travel in another car regularly – for example, with other family members – check the car seat fits their car, too.
- Always choose a baby or child car seat that's right for your child's current height and weight – see *What size car seat?* for more.
- Don't buy a secondhand car seat. It could have been damaged in an accident, and may not have all its parts, including the instructions. It may also not be the safest and most user-friendly model, plus it may not fit your car properly.
- Only accept a car seat from friends or family if you know its history, it's not too old and it comes with instructions.
- Think about how you will be using the car seat. If you'll be lifting your baby in and out of the car a lot, for example, you may be better off getting a lightweight seat with a base that stays in the car.
- All car seats in this country should be EU approved. Look for the "E" mark label on the seat.
- i-Size car seats
 - i-Size is a new European safety standard for baby and child car seats. It's part of regulation ECE R129, which will eventually replace the old safety regulation R44/04. The idea is that all car seats will eventually meet the tighter i-Size safety standards.
 - Your car must have Isofix connectors for you to be able to use an i-Size car seat. At the moment there are only a few i-Size seats on the market in the UK and not all cars have Isofix connectors.
 - There's no deadline for the old regulation – and car seats – to be phased out yet, but it won't be until at least 2018.
 - Visit the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) child car seats website for more on i-Size car seats.
- Car Seat Sizes

- group 0+ – rear-facing car seats suitable for babies aged up to about 15 months or who weigh up to 13 kg (29lb); some can be clipped on to a pushchair frame and are known as travel systems
 - group 1 – forward-facing seats suitable for children who weigh 9-18kg (20-40lb) or who are aged from about 9 months to 4.5 years
 - group 2/3 – high-backed booster seats suitable for children who weigh 15-36kg (33lb-5st 9lb) or are aged from about 3 to 12 years
 - You can also buy combination seats that cross over these groups, such as group 0+/1 seats, which are suitable from birth until your child weighs about 18kg (40lb) or is aged about 4.5. These can be more economical, but may not offer the same level of protection.
- It is dangerous and illegal to carry a baby in a rear-facing baby seat in a front passenger seat that has an active airbag. Forward-facing seats in the same position, while not illegal, are not ideal. It's always safer for children to travel in the back of the car.
 - Make sure the seat is fitted properly in the car, following the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Look out for safety days where experts demonstrate how to fit baby and child car seats safely. These often take place in supermarket or shopping mall car parks.
 - Make sure you always put your baby into their car seat from the pavement side of the car.
 - Make sure your baby is securely strapped in according to the manufacturer's instructions. When you buy your car seat, ask the retail staff to demonstrate how to strap your baby into it.
 - Use a rear-facing car seat for as long as your baby fits into it, as these offer better protection in the event of a car accident.