



Safety for Your Child: 6 to 12 Months

Did you know that hundreds of children younger than 1 year die every year in the United States because of injuries — most of which can be prevented?

Often, injuries happen because parents are not aware of what their children can do. Your child is a fast learner and will suddenly be able to roll over, crawl, sit, and stand. Your child may climb before walking, or walk with support months before you expect. Your child will grasp at almost anything and reach things he or she could not reach before.

Falls

Because of your child's new abilities, he or she will fall often. Protect your child from injury. Use gates on stairways and doors. Install operable window guards on all windows above the first floor. Remove sharp-edged or hard furniture from the room where your child plays.

Do not use a baby walker. Your child may tip it over, fall out of it, or fall down the stairs in it. Baby walkers allow children to get to places where they can pull hot foods or heavy objects down on themselves.

If your child has a serious fall or does not act normally after a fall, call your doctor.

Burns

At 6 to 12 months children grab at everything. NEVER leave cups of hot coffee on tables or counter edges. And NEVER carry hot liquids or food near your child or while holding your child. He or she could get burned. Also, if your child is left to crawl or walk around stoves, wall or floor heaters, or other hot appliances, he or she is likely to get burned. A safer place for your child while you are cooking, eating, or unable to provide your full attention is the playpen, crib, or stationary activity center, or buckled into a high chair.

If your child does get burned, put cold water on the burned area immediately. Keep the burned area in cold water for a few minutes to cool it off. Then cover the burn loosely with a dry bandage or clean cloth. Call your doctor for all burns. To protect your child from tap water scalds, the hottest temperature at the faucet should be no more than 120°F. In many cases you can adjust your water heater.

Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, especially in furnace and sleeping areas. Test the alarms every month. It is best to use smoke alarms that use long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.

Drowning

At this age your child loves to play in water. Empty all the water from a bathtub, pail, or any container of water immediately after use. Keep the door to the bathroom closed. NEVER leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, pail of water, wading or swimming pool, or any other water, even for a moment. Drowning can happen in less than 2 inches of water. Knowing how to swim does NOT mean your child is safe in or near water. Stay within an arm's length of your child around water.

If you have a swimming pool, now is the time to install a fence that separates the house from the pool. The pool should be fenced in on all 4 sides. Most children drown when they wander out of the house and fall into a pool that is not fenced off from the house. Be prepared — install a fence around your pool now, before your child begins to walk!

Poisoning and Choking

Your child will explore the world by putting anything and everything into his or her mouth. **NEVER** leave small objects or balloons in your child's reach, even for a moment. Don't feed your child hard pieces of food such as hot dogs, raw carrots, grapes, peanuts, or popcorn. Cut all of his or her food into thin slices to prevent choking.

Be prepared if your child starts to choke. Learn how to save the life of a choking child. Ask your doctor to recommend the steps you need to take.

Children will put everything into their mouths, even if it doesn't taste good. Many ordinary things in your house can be poisonous to your child. Be sure to keep household products such as cleaners, chemicals, and medicines up, up, and away, completely out of sight and reach. Never store lye drain cleaners in your home. Use safety latches or locks on drawers and cupboards. Remember, your child doesn't understand or remember "no" while exploring.

If your child does eat something that could be poisonous, call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222 immediately. Do not make your child vomit.

Strangulation and Suffocation

Place your baby's crib away from windows. Cords from window blinds and draperies can strangle your child. Use cordless window coverings, or if this is not possible, tie cords high and out of reach. Do not knot cords together.

Plastic wrappers and bags form a tight seal if placed over the mouth and nose and may suffocate your child. Keep them away from your child.

And Remember Car Safety

Car crashes are a great danger to your child's life and health. Most injuries and deaths caused by car crashes can be prevented by the use of car safety seats **EVERY TIME** your child is in the car. All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer. A rear-facing car safety seat should **NEVER** be placed in front of a passenger air bag. Your child, besides being much safer in a car safety seat, will behave better so you can pay attention to your driving. The safest place for all infants and children to ride is in the back seat.

Do not leave your child alone in a car. Keep vehicles and their trunks locked. Children who are left in a car can die of heat stroke because temperatures can reach deadly levels in minutes.

Remember, the biggest threat to your child's life and health is an injury.