



Safety for Your Child: 1 to 2 Years

Did you know that injuries are the leading cause of death of children younger than 4 years in the United States? Most of these injuries can be prevented.

Often, injuries happen because parents are not aware of what their children can do. At this age your child can walk, run, climb, jump, and explore everything. Because of all the new things he or she can do, this stage is a very dangerous time in your child's life. It is your responsibility to protect your child from injury. Your child cannot understand danger or remember "no" while exploring.

Firearm Hazards

Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than of being injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. Handguns are especially dangerous. If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with the ammunition locked separately. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Poisonings

Children continue to explore their world by putting everything in their mouths, even if it doesn't taste good. Your child can open doors and drawers, take things apart, and open bottles easily now, so you must use safety caps on all medicines and toxic household products. Keep the safety caps on at all times or find safer substitutes to use. Contact Poison Help for more information.

Your child is now able to get into and on top of everything. Be sure to keep all household products and medicines completely out of sight and reach. Never store lye drain cleaners in your home. Keep all products in their original containers.

If your child does put something poisonous into his or her mouth, call Poison Help immediately. Attach the Poison Help line (1-800-222-1222) to your phone. Do not make your child vomit.

Falls

To prevent serious falls, lock the doors to any dangerous areas. Use gates on stairways and install operable window guards above the first floor. Remove sharp-edged furniture from the room your child plays and sleeps in. At this age your child will walk well and start to climb, jump, and run as well. A chair left next to a kitchen counter, table, or window allows your child to climb to dangerously high places. Remember, your child does not understand what is dangerous.

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

Burns

The kitchen is a dangerous place for your child during meal preparation. Hot liquids, grease, and hot foods spilled on your child will cause serious burns. A safer place for your child while you are cooking, eating, or unable to give him your full attention is the playpen, crib, or stationary activity center, or buckled into a high chair. It's best to keep your child out of the kitchen while cooking.

Children who are learning to walk will grab anything to steady themselves, including hot oven doors, wall heaters, or outdoor grills. Keep your child out of rooms where there are hot objects that may be touched or put a barrier around them.

Your child will reach for your hot food or cup of coffee, so don't leave it within your child's reach. NEVER carry your child and hot liquids at the same time. You can't handle both.

If your child does get burned, immediately put cold water on the burned area. 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. 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. Empty all buckets after each use. Keep the bathroom doors closed. Your child can drown in less than 2 inches of water. Knowing how to swim does NOT mean your child is safe near or in water. Stay within an arm's length of your child around water.

If you have a swimming pool, fence it on all 4 sides with a fence at least 4 feet high, and be sure the gates are self-latching. Most children drown when they wander out of the house and fall into a pool that is not fenced off from the house. You cannot watch your child every minute while he or she is in the house. It only takes a moment for your child to get out of your house and fall into your pool.

And Remember Car Safety

Car crashes are a great danger to your child's life and health. The crushing forces to your child's brain and body in a crash or sudden stop, even at low speeds, can cause severe injuries or death. To prevent these injuries USE a car safety seat EVERY TIME your child rides 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. Be sure that the safety seat is installed correctly. Read and follow the instructions that come with the car safety seat and the instructions for using car safety seats in the owners' manual of your car. The safest place for all infants and children to ride is in the back seat.

Do not leave your child alone in or around the 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. They can be strangled by power windows or knock the vehicle into gear. Always walk behind your car to be sure your child is not there before you back out of your driveway. You may not see your child behind your car in the rearview mirror.

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