



Safety for Your Child: 2 to 4 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. Children learn fast, and before you know it your child will be jumping, running, riding a tricycle, and using tools. Your child is at special risk for injuries from falls, drowning, poisons, burns, and car crashes. Your child doesn't understand dangers or remember "no" while playing and exploring.

Falls

Because your child's abilities are so great now, he or she will find an endless variety of dangerous situations at home and in the neighborhood.

Your child can fall off play equipment, out of windows, down stairs, off a bike or tricycle, and off anything that can be climbed on. Be sure the surface under play equipment is soft enough to absorb a fall. Use safety tested mats or loose-fill materials (shredded rubber, sand, woodchips, or bark) maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches underneath play equipment. Install the protective surface at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) in all directions from the equipment.

Lock the doors to any dangerous areas. Use gates on stairways and install operable window guards above the first floor. Fence in the play yard. If your child has a serious fall or does not act normally after a fall, call your doctor.

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. If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with ammunition locked separately. Handguns are especially dangerous. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Burns

The kitchen can be a dangerous place for your child, especially when you are cooking. If your child is underfoot, hot liquids, grease, and hot foods can spill on him or her and cause serious burns. Find something safe for your child to do while you are cooking.

Remember that kitchen appliances and other hot surfaces such as irons, ovens, wall heaters, and outdoor grills can burn your child long after you have finished using them. 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 hot 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 with long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.

Poisonings

Your child will be able to open any drawer and climb anywhere curiosity leads. Your child may swallow anything he or she finds. Use only household products and medicines that are absolutely necessary and keep them safely capped and out of sight and reach. Keep all products in their original containers.

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

And Remember Car Safety

Car crashes are the greatest danger to your child's life and health. The crushing forces to your child's brain and body in a collision or sudden stop, even at low speeds, can cause injuries or death. To prevent these injuries, correctly USE a car safety seat EVERY TIME your child is in the car. If your child weighs more than the highest weight allowed by the seat or if his or her ears come to the top of the car safety seat, use a belt positioning booster seat.

The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat. In an emergency, if a child must ride in the front seat, move the vehicle seat back as far as it can go, away from the air bag.

Do not allow your child to play or ride a tricycle in the street. Your child should play in a fenced yard or playground. Driveways are also dangerous. Walk behind your car before you back out of your driveway to be sure your child is not behind your car. You may not see your child through the rear view mirror.

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