



Safety for Your Child: Birth to 6 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 could 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 wiggling off a bed or reaching for your cup of hot coffee.

Car Injuries

Car crashes are a great threat to your child's life and health. Most injuries and deaths from car crashes can be prevented by the use of car safety seats. Your child, besides being much safer in a car safety seat, will behave better, so you can pay attention to your driving. Make your newborn's first ride home from the hospital a safe one — in a car safety seat. Your infant should ride in the back seat in a rear-facing car seat.

Make certain that your baby's car safety seat is installed correctly. Read and follow the instructions that come with the car safety seat and the sections in the owners' manual of your car on using car safety seats correctly. Use the car safety seat EVERY time your child is in the car.

NEVER put an infant in the front seat of a car with a passenger air bag.

Falls

Babies wiggle and move and push against things with their feet soon after they are born. Even these very first movements can result in a fall. As your baby grows and is able to roll over, he or she may fall off of things unless protected. Do not leave your baby alone on changing tables, beds, sofas, or chairs. Put your baby in a safe place such as a crib or playpen when you cannot hold him.

Your baby may be able to crawl as early as 6 months. Use gates on stairways and close doors to keep your baby out of rooms where he or she might get hurt. Install operable window guards on all windows above the first floor.

Do not use a baby walker. Your baby may tip the walker over, fall out of it, or fall down stairs and seriously injure his head. Baby walkers let children get to places where they can pull heavy objects or hot food on themselves.

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

Burns

At 3 to 5 months, babies will wave their fists and grab at things. NEVER carry your baby and hot liquids, such as coffee, or foods at the same time. Your baby can get burned. You can't handle both! 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.

If your baby gets burned, immediately put the burned area in cold water. 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 and call your doctor.

To protect your baby from house fires, be 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.

Choking and Suffocation

Babies explore their environment by putting anything and everything into their mouths. NEVER leave small objects in your baby's reach, even for a moment. NEVER feed your baby hard pieces of food such as chunks of raw carrots, apples, hot dogs, grapes, peanuts, and popcorn. Cut all the foods you feed your baby into thin pieces to prevent choking. Be prepared if your baby starts to choke. Ask your doctor to recommend the steps you need to know. Learn how to save the life of a choking child.

To prevent possible suffocation and reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), your baby should always sleep on his or her back. Your baby should have his or her own crib or bassinet with no pillows, stuffed toys, bumpers, or loose bedding. NEVER put your baby on a water bed, bean bag, or anything that is soft enough to cover the face and block air to the nose and mouth.

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 baby.