



Making Your Home Safe for Your Baby:

Information for Moms, Dads & People Who Care for Children

Baby Safety Tips

June 2010



First Nations Centre
220 Laurier Ave. W,
Ottawa, ON K1P 5Z9
Tel: 613-237-9462
Toll free: 1-877-602-4445
Fax: 613-237-1810
E-mail: fnc@naho.ca
Web: www.naho.ca

Baby Safety Tips

There are steps you can take to prevent serious injuries. Start by preparing your home in advance for your child's development (PHAC, 2008). Install safety gates at the top and the bottom of stairs before your baby starts to crawl and put child-proof locks on drawers and cupboards before your baby is able to open them.

To help you better understand your child's world, get down on the floor and look around. See if there are small things that your baby could choke on, objects that your baby could pull down or drawers or cupboards that could be opened by your child.

Some Safety Tips:

Baby Jumpers

- Make sure the jumper is secured to the door frame and follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing the jumper.
- Always supervise the baby while in the jumper.
- Make sure the jumper is appropriate for your baby's weight, height, and age.

Baby Safety Gates

- Not all baby safety gates can be used to block stairs. Some gates, such as pressure gates, are not safe to use on stairs and are only safe for using between rooms. Make sure you only use approved safety gates on stairs. Use spring loaded gates at the bottom of the stairs and at the top of the staircase use a gate that attaches securely to the wall (PHAC, 2008). Check baby gates often to make sure they remain secure.
- Make sure that the holes in the gate are not big enough for a baby's head to fit through and that the holes do not allow the baby to use them to climb over the gate.
- Make sure that your baby safety gates are installed correctly using the instructions provided.



- Make sure that baby gates and are not left open, down or unsecured.

Baby Sling/Carriers

- Most injuries to babies in carriers happen when the baby falls from the carrier because the care giver has tripped, the product has broken, or the baby slips over the side of the carrier or out through the leg holes. Always hold onto the baby when bending over and ensure that there are no rips or tears in the fabric and no damaged hardware (Health Canada, 2008a).
- Make sure the carrier is appropriate for your baby's weight and height and for the size of the adult carrying the baby.
- Do not use the carrier during activities such as cooking, biking, drinking hot drinks, or any other activity that may increase the risk of injury.

Car Seat Safety

- Ensure that the car seat is installed correctly according to the instructions. Properly install the car seat before bringing your newborn home from the hospital. Infant car seats should be in the back seat, facing the back of the car and secured with the seat belt. If the car seat can't be secured correctly in the vehicle, use a different car that will allow safe installation of the car seat (Transport Canada, 2002).
- An infant car seat should not be used as a crib. Never leave your baby unattended while in a car seat (Transport Canada, 2002).
- Choose a car seat that will fit your child and make sure the seat fits well in the back seat of your vehicle.
- Car seats must meet the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard and have a National Safety Mark on them (Health Canada, 2009f, p. 4).

- Use car seats until your child is at least 18 kg (40 pounds). This is approximately when your child is about 4½ years old. At this point your child is ready for a booster seat (Transport Canada, 2006). If your child does not weigh at least 18 kg using a booster can cause your child to be hurt if the car is in an accident.

Change Tables

- Always keep one hand on your baby while on the change table. The moment it takes for you to reach for something is long enough for your baby to roll over and fall off (Health Canada, 2006).

Crib Safety

- Cribs made before September 1986 are not safe (PHAC, 2008). It is illegal to advertise, sell, or give away cribs made before this date (Health Canada, 2006). Ensure your crib was made after this date.
- Keep your baby's crib away from windows and blind cords.
- Do not keep pillows or stuffed animals in the crib.
- Make sure the mattress fits tightly against all four sides of the crib. If you push the mattress to one corner of the crib, the gaps between the mattress and the sides of the crib should not be more than 3 cm (13/16 inches) (Health Canada, 2006). The mattress should not be more than 15 cm (6 inches) thick.
- Replace crib mattresses that are worn out or not firm.
- The crib's frame should be solid and the sides should lock into place. Make sure you have locked the sides after putting your child into the crib.
- Check for loose screws often and tighten them.
- When your child is able to sit up, move the mattress down to the lowest level (PHAC, 2008).
- Make sure toys attached to cribs are installed correctly and check often to make sure they are securely attached. Remove mobiles and toys that at-



- tach to the crib when the baby is able to push up on their hands and knees.
- Do not leave the baby in the crib with a necklace, scarf, elastic band, or pacifier on a long cord because these could strangle the baby.
- A cradle is also a safe place for a baby until the baby is 6 months old or can sit up.

High Chairs

- Always supervise children in high chairs.
- Make sure the high chair has a strap that fits between the child's legs as well as a safety belt that fits around the child's waist (Health Canada 2008b).
- Make sure the high chair is placed so that it isn't possible for the child to push against counters, walls, and furniture and tip over. Make sure that the high chair is stable to reduce the risk of it tipping over.

Infant Bath Seats

- Infant bath seats or bath rings can be drowning hazards. Even though the child may seem safe in a bath seat, never leave a child unattended when in the bath (Health Canada, 2009c). If you have to leave the room for any reason, take your baby with you. Always stay within arm's reach of a child in an infant bath seat.
- Bath seats should only be used for an infant that is able to sit up on their own and shouldn't be used once a baby can pull themselves into a standing position (this can cause the bath seat to tip) (Health Canada, 2009c).
- Do not use damaged bath seats and check the seat often for damage. If the seat uses suction cups, test the suction cups before putting your child into the seat.

Infant Swings

- Always supervise your baby when in the swing.
- Make sure the swing is placed a safe distance from furniture, doors, and stairs and make sure the base is wide and “skid resistant” to prevent the swing from tipping or moving (Health Canada 2009e).
- When the swing is being used, always put it on the floor on an even surface.
- Make sure the safety straps are properly adjusted so that the baby cannot lean over the sides (Health Canada, 2009e).

Playpens

- Playpens should be placed in a safe area away from objects that the child can pull into the playpen.
- Never put the baby into a playpen with a scarf, necklace, or any rope or cord.
- Make sure that toys attached to playpens are secure and check them often to make sure they are properly attached. Remove mobiles or toy bars attached to the playpen when the baby is able to push up on her hands and knees.
- Make sure the mesh on the playpen only has small holes and that it is not torn.
- Carefully follow the manufacturer’s instructions when setting up a playpen.

Stationary Activity Centres

- Stay with the baby at all times when using the activity centre. Do not leave the child alone even for a second. If the doorbell rings or you have to leave the room, take your baby with you.
- Keep the activity centre away from stairs, windows, plants, lamps, tvs, etc.
- Removing wheels from a baby walker does not



make it a stationary activity centre. Destroy and throw away baby walkers (Health Canada, 2009a).

- Make sure the activity centre is appropriate for your baby's weight. Read the label.
- Make sure the activity centre is set up correctly by carefully following the manufacturer's instructions.

Strollers

- Strollers made before 1985 may not meet safety standards. Strollers must have a lap belt or safety harness that is securely attached to the seat or frame of the stroller (Health Canada, 2009f, p. 11).
- Children should be supervised when in a stroller.
- Make sure you choose a stroller that suits your child's height and weight.
- Use the brakes when the stroller is not moving and when putting the child into or taking the child out of the stroller.

Walkers

- Baby walkers are dangerous. Baby walkers have been banned in Canada since April, 2004 (Health Canada, 2009a). It is illegal to advertise for sale, sell, or give away baby walkers including at flea markets and garage sales (Health Canada 2009a). If you have a baby walker, take off the wheels **and** throw it away (PHAC, 2008).

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing and setting up equipment for your baby. The next section provides general tips for keeping your baby safe at home.

Bathtub Safety

- Never leave your child unattended in the bathtub.

Children can drown in only 4 cm (1.5 inches) of water (PHAC, 2008). Keep one hand on your baby at all times. If you have to leave the bathroom, even just for a second, take your child with you.

- When your child is a toddler or a preschooler, stay within an arms reach.
- Hot water from the tap can burn your child. Always test the temperature of bath water with your elbow before putting your child into the tub. Start with cold water, add hot water, then cold water again to make the taps cool to touch.

Burns and Scalds

- Cover electrical outlets when they are not being used. Ensure outlet covers are secure. Options include store bought plastic covers, but inexpensive options include covering unused outlets with tape, such as duct tape.
- Keep hot liquids out of your child's reach. Keep hot coffee or tea cups away from your child and do not carry hot liquids and your child at the same time.
- When using the stove, use the back burners and turn handles toward the back of the stove to prevent your child from pulling the pot down and burning himself. Teach your child to play away from the stove.
- Do not leave cords hanging so that your child can't pull items, like a full kettle, down (AFN, 2006, p. 11).
- Keep lighters and matches away from children and out of their sight. Remember that child resistant lighters are not child proof (PHAC, 2008).
- Put up a barrier around gas or wood burning fireplaces or wood burning stoves to prevent your child from touching hot surfaces.
- Keep your child away from the barbecue when it is in use (Health Canada, 2006).
- Always supervise children when around an open flame.



Household Poisons

- Keep house cleaners out of reach of your children or locked up.
- Make sure items such as nail polish and perfumes are out of reach.
- Make sure that medications are out of reach and locked up and teach your child that medicine and vitamins are not candy (PHAC, 2008). Remember that child resistant bottles are not completely child proof.

This baby safety toolkit contains another information sheet with specific information on household products that may be dangerous to your baby.

Suffocation and Choking

- Any object that can fit in your child's mouth can cause choking (PHAC, 2008). Keep small objects off the floor and away from your child. Make sure that young children don't play with toys with small parts meant for older children.
- Keep blind cords cut short, tied up high, or use a loop fastener to secure any blind cord loops safely and out of reach of your child.
- Don't give children foods they can choke on, such as raw carrots or celery. Nuts, popcorn, seeds, hot dogs, and hard candy can also cause choking (PHAC, 2008). Grate or cut hard and round foods into small thin strips. Learn the signs of choking and what you can do to help a choking child.
- Remove drawstring from children's clothing to prevent them from catching and choking your child.

Toy Storage

- Store toys for older children separate from toys for young children.

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- Use toy boxes without lids. If there is a lid, remove it or make sure there are air holes so that your child can breathe in case your child climbs inside.
- Make sure there is no latch or lock that could trap a child inside.
- The lid should be lightweight with sturdy hinges to prevent the lid from falling on the child's head. This can cause injury and death.

Pacifier Safety

- Never tie a pacifier around your baby's neck because it could strangle your baby.
- Check the pacifier often for signs of breakdown, such as tears or holes in the nipple. If the nipple breaks down, the small pieces that break off could cause your baby to choke.
- Make sure the nipple is firmly attached to the ring or handle so that the nipple doesn't become a choking hazard.
- If your baby is chewing on the pacifier a teething ring might be a better option to prevent choking.

Things to Remember

- Falls are the greatest cause of injury for babies and young children. Most falls for young children are from furniture, porches, windows, or stairs (Health Canada, 2007). Watch children at all times especially when sitting or lying on furniture, sitting or walking on the porch, or when near stairs. Keep furniture away from windows to prevent your child from falling out the window. Screens are not meant to stop a child from falling out (Health Canada, 2007).
- When buying second hand toys or products (such as cribs) for your baby, make sure the items are not damaged or cracked and do not have any missing or loose parts (Health Canada, 2009d). Do not buy used items that are missing their instructions. Be sure to check if the product has been banned (such as baby walkers) or recalled since these products



are not safe. Check the Consumer Product Recalls website at <http://cpsr-rspc.hc-sc.gc.ca/PR-RP/home-accueil-eng.jsp>.

- Make sure your furniture is able to hold the weight and size of the television and don't put the television on a dresser (Health Canada, 2009b). Dressers are not designed to hold the weight of a television (Health Canada, 2009b). Children climb dressers because the drawers can be used as steps. Once a drawer has been pulled out, the dresser becomes unstable and is more likely to tip over.
- Secure furniture, such as bookcases, to the wall to prevent these items from falling on a child if the child starts to climb on them. Most injuries from an object falling onto children are caused by televisions (Health Canada, 2009b). To prevent your television from falling onto your child, place the television near the back of a low, stable piece of furniture.
- Keep cords to the back of furniture and don't allow cords to hang over the edge of furniture or counters to prevent your child from pulling on cords and pulling objects down on themselves.
- Baby-proof your drawers and cupboards. You can do this using store bought safety locks (that require you to release a latch to open the drawer or cupboard) or you can keep drawers and cupboards closed using elastic bands or string. If you use elastic bands, place the elastic tightly around side-by-side doorknobs. String can be used to tie 2 cupboard doors together. Be sure to check your safety devices often and make sure that they are still working to keep your baby from opening the cupboard or drawer.

Remember, bumps and bruises will happen but most serious injuries can be prevented. Use the information provided in this toolkit as well as the other resources list-

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ed in the "For More Information" section to help make your home as safe as possible for your family. If you have any concerns, speak to your health care provider. The packaging for baby equipment and toys should list the contact information for the manufacturer should you need more information regarding a certain item.

Baby Safety Checklist

Before bringing baby home:

- Have you properly installed your baby's carseat?
- Have you securely installed baby safety gates?
- Have you made sure that electrical outlets are covered?
- Have you made sure that drawers and cupboards have baby proof locks or latches?
- Have you posted the number for your health care provider and poison control centre near the phone for quick access?
- Have you secured heavy furniture to the wall to prevent it from tipping over?
- Have you removed or securely shortened blind cords?
- Have you placed all potential household poisons out of reach in a safely locked or latched cupboard or drawer?
- Have you set up a barrier around gas/wood fire places or wood stoves?

For More Information

Car seat safety:

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/safedrivers-childsafety-car-index-873.htm>

Toy Safety Tips:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/toy_safe-jouet_secur-eng.php

Information for Shoppers of Second Hand Products:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/info_secondhand-produits-eng.php



Publications for Consumer Safety (Health Canada):
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/index-eng.php>

Is Your Child Safe? (Public Health Agency of Canada):
http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/allchildren_touslesenfants/she_security-eng.php

Remember to check for product recalls on children's toys and equipment by contacting the manufacturer or Health Canada Consumer Product Safety (website: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/advisories-avis/index-eng.php>)

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National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO)
Organisation nationale de la santé autochtone (ONSA)
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