

KEYS TO GREAT PARENTING



Fun and
Learning
with Your
Baby or Toddler

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Safety Tips for Infants and Toddlers

We've all heard expressions such as "Put yourself in the other person's shoes," or "Try to see what the world is like from her point of view." When it comes to keeping your young child safe and sound, following this advice is a good way to start. Get down on the floor and crawl around in each room of your apartment or house. Look for hazards and curiosities that you would probably investigate if you were your child. You may be surprised at what you discover.

To help prevent electrical injuries, insert plastic covers on all electrical outlets in your home. You can buy them inexpensively in most supermarkets and discount stores. Place extension cords well out of your child's reach. Sucking or biting a connected cord or socket can cause severe mouth burns. Water can burn also, so adjust your hot water temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Check the water temperature with your wrist or elbow before putting your child in the bathtub.

While mild-temperature water can be lots of fun and feel really good, it also can be deadly for little ones. Children can drown in as little as 1 inch of water. When your child is in the bathtub, near the toilet, or near a bucket of water, watch him at all times.

Keep the cords from blinds and curtains high and out of your child's reach. Also make sure he cannot reach the cords from his crib. To help prevent choking, remove toys and other objects small enough to fit in a toilet paper tube. It's best to not let your child play with your car keys because they tend to be covered with oil and bacteria.

To help prevent strangling, make sure the widths between the slats on your baby's crib or wooden playpen are 2 and 3/8 inches or less. Also to reduce the risk of strangling, remove hanging toys from the crib when your baby is able to pull up to sit or stand.

When diapering your baby or toddler on a table or counter, keep one hand on him at all times so that the risk of falling is minimized. To help prevent slipping in the bathroom, put rubber mats in your bathtub and shower.

Arrange your furniture to allow a safe, open space for rolling, creeping, crawling, and toddling. Move furniture that could easily tip over to an off-limits room. Put screens or other barriers around fireplaces, space heaters, or wood stoves. Repair or throw out broken toys or those with sharp edges. Install cushioning pads on sharp corners and furniture edges to reduce cuts and bruises from falls.

If you use a toy chest, remove the lid to help prevent the risk of head injuries or suffocation. Plastic see-through tubs on low, open shelves are a much better way to store toys.

Place items like sharp knives and cleaning products out of reach. Keep products in the containers they came in so it is clear what they are. Put pots and pans on the stove's back burners with their handles turned toward the center of the stove. Place electric appliances far back on the counter top and keep cups of beverages out of reach.

To reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), put your young baby to sleep on her back rather than her stomach. Place a firm, tight-fitting mattress in the crib to help keep her from smothering. Remove all soft items from the crib for the first 12 months. Do not use a waterbed, sheepskin, or pillow for a bed.

Of course, protect your infant or toddler—and obey the law—by always properly using an approved car safety seat. Carefully read the manufacturer's instructions to make sure the seat is installed correctly. Safety seats dramatically reduce injuries and deaths.

In spite of our best efforts, emergencies can happen. Here are some ways to prepare:

- ◆ Find a class where you can learn or review cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid procedures.
- ◆ Post emergency phone numbers next to your phone. The list should include 911 and the phone numbers of the poison control center and the hospital emergency room.
- ◆ Keep first-aid items handy.
- ◆ Regularly inspect your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace worn-out batteries.