

# Preventing Injuries: How Can I Keep My Child Safe?

## Car safety

- Use a car seat or booster until your child can properly fit in a seat belt, usually between nine and 12 years of age. Children should sit in the back seat until they are at least 13 years old.
- Never drive after drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- Focus on the road, and don't text and drive. Even hands-free phones increase the risk of a crash.
- Parent resource: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS>)

## Poisoning

- Call the National Capital Poison Center (1-800-222-1222) or 911 immediately if you think your child has swallowed something that could be dangerous.
- Don't give your child syrup of ipecac.
- Parent resource: National Capital Poison Center (<http://www.poison.org>)

## Suffocation

- Place children younger than one year on their backs to sleep.
- Make sure cribs and child beds meet the latest safety guidelines and are put together correctly.
- Use the correct size mattress for your child's crib. Use sheets that fit tightly.

- Remove objects from beds and play areas that could strangle or trap your child, like cords and strings.
- Parent resource: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission crib guidelines (<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>)

## Drowning

- A fence that blocks the pool from the rest of the yard is best.
- Stay in the water and close enough to touch your child whenever he or she is swimming.
- Use only flotation devices that are approved by the U.S. Coast Guard. Many armbands and rings are not meant to keep your child from drowning.
- Always have a phone by the pool so you can call 911 in an emergency.
- Enroll your child in swimming lessons at four years old.
- Learn CPR in case your child stops breathing.
- Parent resource: U.S. Coast Guard recommendations for choosing a flotation device (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg5214/pfdselection.asp#selection>)

## Fire safety

- Install smoke detectors and check them regularly to make sure they are working.



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- Make a home fire escape plan. Practice with your family so that your child knows what to do if a fire happens.
- Don't keep matches and lighters where children can reach them.
- Don't smoke or allow others to smoke in your house.
- Parent resource: National Fire Protection Association (<http://www.nfpa.org> and <http://www.sparky.org>)

## Falls

- Don't let your child use a walker unless your doctor recommends it for special needs.
- Don't use bunk beds for children six years and younger.

## Bicycle safety

- Be sure children wear helmets for activities like bicycling, skating, and skiing.
- Be a good example by using helmets and safety equipment yourself.
- Parent resource: FamilyDoctor.org (<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/exercise-fitness/sports-safety/bike-safety-tips.html>)

## Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/kids/home-safety/child-safety-keeping-your-home-safe-for-your-baby.html>

Safe Kids USA

<http://www.safekids.org>

April 2013

## Notes:

**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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