

Keeping Your Baby Safe at Home

Important tips

As the parent of a new baby, you have many issues to think about. This chapter explains how to keep your baby safe, what physical symptoms are normal, and how to prevent falls and accidents.

How can I protect my baby from strangers?

- Allow **only** people you know and trust well to enter your home. A kidnapper can be someone who has recently made friends with a family that has a new baby.
- When you are in public places, be alert to people you have just met who offer to watch your baby. Do **not** leave your baby, even for a moment, with someone you do not know very well. If you need to use the restroom, take your baby into the stall with you.
- Think about the risks you are taking if you:
 - Place a birth notice in the newspaper. If you do this, **never include your address.**
 - Use outdoor decorations to announce your infant's arrival. Balloons, signs, or large bouquets of flowers tell strangers that you have a new baby in the house.



A new baby's health and safety are a parent's top priorities.

How can I reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome?

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden, unexpected death of an infant who is less than 1 year old. We do not know what causes SIDS, but we do know some things you can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS. Some of these are:

For your baby's safety while napping or sleeping, follow the ABCs:



***A**lone in crib*



***B**ack to sleep*



***C**lose to your bed*

- **“Back to sleep.”** Always place your baby on their back to sleep, for naps and at night. This is the safest sleep position. Since we began advising parents to place their babies on their backs to sleep, there are half as many deaths from SIDS.
- **Use a firm mattress.** Always place your baby on a firm sleep surface, such as a safety-approved crib mattress covered with a fitted sheet. **Never** place your baby to sleep on pillows, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces.
- **Breastfeeding** is linked with a 50% reduction in SIDS. In other words, formula feeding doubles the risk of SIDS.
- **Clear the clutter from your baby's sleep area.** Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area. This includes pillows, blankets, quilts, sheepskins, and pillow-like crib bumpers. Also keep any other items away from your baby's face.
- **Do not allow smoking around your baby.** Do not smoke before or after the birth of your baby. Do not let anyone else smoke around your baby.
- **Keep a separate sleeping area for your baby.** Keep your baby's sleep area near, but apart, from where you and others sleep. Your baby should **not** sleep in a bed or on a couch or armchair with adults or other children. But, your baby can sleep in the same room as you or others. If you breastfeed in bed, put your baby in their separate sleep area after feeding.
- **Try using a pacifier.** When breastfeeding is going very well, or after about 4 weeks, think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing your infant down to sleep. Do not force your baby to take it. If you are not breastfeeding, you can try a pacifier sooner.
- **Keep your baby comfortable when they sleep:**
 - Do **not** let your baby get too hot. Dress your baby in light sleep clothing.
 - Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.
- **Immunize your baby.** Follow the advice of your baby's care provider about vaccines.
- **Avoid using products that claim to lower the risk of SIDS.** Most have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.

- **Do not rely on a baby monitor to reduce the risk of SIDS.** If you have questions about using monitors for other reasons, talk with your healthcare provider.

When are accidents likely to occur?

Accidents tend to occur when:

- An infant is left alone, even for a short time.
- The infant or caregiver is tired, ill, hungry, thirsty, or stressed.
- Family routines change.
- Others are caring for your infant.
- The baby learns new skills such as crawling or walking.

To lower the risk of accidents, pay close attention to your baby's safety at these times. **Never leave your infant without a trusted caregiver in charge.**

How do I protect my baby from falls?

Infants can and do fall. Emergency rooms report that falls are the most common accidents in children 0 to 2 years old.

Newborn falls often occur when the baby slips out of a parent's arms when the parent falls asleep. To protect your baby from falls:

- If you gave birth by Cesarean, remember that pain medicines can make you sleepy.
- All caregivers should watch out for sleepiness in each other. It can come on quickly. When someone who is holding your baby gets sleepy, move your baby to a safe sleeping area.
- Be aware that breastfeeding releases hormones in your body that can make you relaxed and sleepy.
- **Never** leave your baby alone on any surface they could fall from.
- Use safety straps on swings, high chairs, bouncers, and strollers.



Infants are 5 times safer in rear-facing car seats.

Car Safety

Injuries that occur in cars are one of the top 4 causes of infant death.

Car seats must face the rear of the car until a baby is at least 2 years old. Infants are 5 times safer in rear-facing car seats. If the car is in an accident, a baby in a rear-facing car seat:

- Is much less likely to have a serious injury

- Has much less force on their head, neck, and spine
 - Is protected by the “cocoon” effect the car seat provides
- Please read the chapter “Car Seat Safety” in this workbook.



Never leave a baby alone in or near water.

Drowning

A baby can drown in as little as 2 inches of water. **Never leave an infant alone in or near water.** Infants must wear a life vest if you take them in a boat.

Burns

Babies are burned most often by house fires, inhaling smoke, hot liquids, and household electrical devices. To keep your baby safe:

- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have fire extinguishers.
- Never allow smoking inside your home.
- Be careful with hot liquids:
 - Do **not** drink hot liquids while you are feeding your baby.
 - Do **not** hold or pass hot drinks to other people while you are holding your baby.

Choking

Choking is very common in babies. Expect it to happen and learn what to do when it does. To help prevent choking:

- Keep small objects away from your baby.
- Give your baby only those toys and food that are right for your baby’s age.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken baby syndrome happens when a baby or child is shaken hard. This kind of injury can happen when a parent or caregiver tries to quiet a crying baby, but the baby keeps crying. The adult can get so frustrated that they shake the baby. **This shaking can cause lasting harm to a baby’s neck, spine, and eyes.**

Talk with your family and anyone who will be taking care of your baby. Tell them about the danger of shaking the baby.

Also read the chapter “Period of PURPLE Crying.” It gives ideas on how to soothe a baby. It also gives tips on how caregivers can soothe themselves when they feel frustrated, tired, or overwhelmed.

Baby-Safe Zones

Every baby needs a place to play and explore. Create at least one baby-safe zone in your home. To do this:

- Use barriers or baby gates, keep floors clean, and provide the right toys for your baby’s age in this area.
- Do a home safety search. Get rid of hazards or lock them up.
- No device can take the place of a caregiver. Do **not** rely on a baby monitor or other device to keep your baby safe.
- Give your baby time:
 - To play alone in a baby-safe place
 - To spend on their tummies each day while they are awake



Although it is safest for babies to sleep on their backs, it is also important for them to spend awake time on their tummies each day.

Resources

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/SIDS
- National Institutes of Health: www.nichd.nih.gov/sids

Shaken Baby Syndrome

- Period of PURPLE Crying: www.purplecrying.info
- Educational video from Seattle Children’s: www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/community-programs/period-of-purple-crying/

Car Seats

Call 800.BUCK.L.UP or visit www.800bucklup.org.

Product Safety

Research the products you use to help care for your newborn and child as they grow. To learn about product recalls, safety tips, and childproofing your home and other places where your child spends time, visit:

- Consumer Product Safety Commission: www.cpsc.gov
- Safe Kids USA: www.safekids.org

Baby Safety Classes

To learn more about keeping your infant safe, take a baby safety class that covers infant CPR and basic safety. Visit these websites to learn more about baby safety classes:

- **UW Medicine:**
www.uwmedicine.org/services/obstetrics/childbirth-classes
- **American Heart Association:** www.cprseattle.com/adult-child-infant-cpr-aed-first-aid
- **Seattle Children's:**
 - www.seattlechildrens.org/content.aspx?id=88132
 - www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/classes-events/cpr-and-first-aid-for-babysitters

Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about your baby's safety, ask your baby's healthcare provider.

For urgent concerns, call 911.