NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
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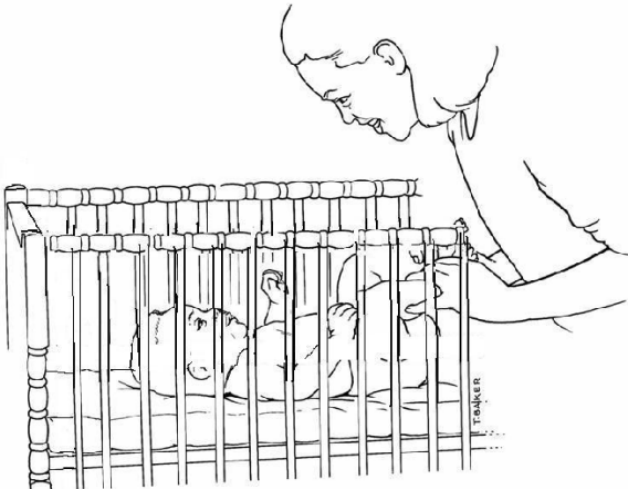
Helping Hand™

Home Safety for Infants and Toddlers

We all want happy and healthy children. That takes thought and effort every day. When a new baby comes into the home, parents need to protect their infant from harm. Here are some things you will need to do to make your home safe for your baby:

Furniture and equipment

- **Crib and Playpen** - In 2011 new safety guidelines were established to make sure that cribs were safer for babies. Please check the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website (http://www.cpsc.gov) for a list of recalled cribs and other items.
  - Crib spindles should be no more than 2-3/8 inches apart (Picture 1). This is about as wide as a 12 ounce drink can or the short side of a dollar bill. Make sure that all joints are secure, that there are no loose screws, nuts, plastic parts or springs. Make sure that there is no peeling paint or splintered wood.
  - The mattress should fit securely in the crib, leaving no gaps around the where your baby could get stuck or trapped.
  - **Drop side cribs should not be used for babies or children**. Babies and children can get trapped in the crib and die. The U.S. is no longer making or selling drop side cribs.



Picture 1 Check the space between the crib's rails

  - **Cribs should be free of pillows, comforters, blankets, bumper pads and stuffed animals.** Use a tight fitting sheet to cover the mattress.
  - Make sure there are no dangling cords from window blinds, lamps or mobiles near the crib.
  - If using a playpen or Pack and Play® make sure the sides lock securely. Playpens should be free of pillows, comforters, blankets, bumper pads and stuffed animals.
  - Refer to the Helping Hand HH-IV-69 *Safe Sleep Practices for Babies,*

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Furniture and equipment, continued

- **High Chair** - When your baby is 5 or 6 months old and can sit up without support, he can use a high chair. The base should be wider than the top of the chair so it does not tip over easily. Make sure the tray latches securely. Always use a 5 point harness when your baby is in the high chair, and never leave him alone in the chair - not even for a minute.
- **Infant Swing** - A fussy baby who cries a lot may be calmed by an infant swing. The swinging movement often soothes the baby. Always use a 5 point harness to secure the baby in the swing and never leave a baby alone in a swing. If the baby falls asleep in the swing, he should be gently removed from the swing and placed in his crib, on his back.
- **Car Seat** – An approved car seat is the most important piece of equipment you can have for your baby's safety (Picture 2). Do not let your infant sleep in the car seat when not traveling. Please refer to the Helping Hand, HH-IV-14 *Child Passenger Safety: Car Seats and Booster Seats*.
- **Baby walkers** are not a good idea and should not be used! Children don't need them to learn to walk and they can be very dangerous. Each year many babies are seriously injured from falls while in walkers.
- **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide detectors** should be installed in the home and checked regularly to make sure they are working correctly.
- **High Up is High Risk.** Keep infant seats off high surfaces and make sure your baby is properly strapped in. Keep hold of children on changing tables, beds, couches, exam tables, counters and chairs. If car seats are used as a carrier, they should be placed on a hard, flat floor, where there is no danger of falling over. Car seats should not be used as a sleep surface.

Picture 2 An approved car seat is the most important piece of equipment you can have.

Toys and pets

- Don't leave your baby alone in a room with a dog, cat, or any pet. Even if your pet seems gentle, it could think your baby is a threat, and could harm him.
- Marbles, plastic bags, balloons, magnets and toys with small loose parts or buttons, are all things that can hurt your baby if they are swallowed. Crib toys should not have parts that can be chewed off or swallowed. Don't tie toys to the crib. The baby's neck, fingers, and toes can get tangled in the string. Any toy that can fit through a cardboard toilet tissue roll is too small to be within the reach of children under 3 years of age.

Food and clothing

Take strings off the bottoms of sleepers so they don't get wrapped around baby's neck or toes. Check all clothing for loose buttons that could be swallowed or strings that could get wrapped around your baby's neck, fingers, or toes

Hold your baby when you feed him. Propping the bottle or giving strained food through a bottle can cause choking. The milk or formula that stays in the mouth when a bottle is propped can lead to tooth decay later. Refer to the Helping Hands, *Dental: Baby Bottle Tooth Decay*, HH-IV-12, and *Bottle Feeding,* HH-IV-5.

If your baby uses a pacifier, do not tie the pacifier to baby's clothes or around his neck.

Do not give your baby any of these foods until he has a full set of teeth and can chew well: apple chunks or slices, grapes, cut-up hot dogs, popcorn, nuts, seeds, round candies, hard chunks of uncooked vegetables. Sometimes well intending siblings like to share their food with their younger siblings, creating a choking risk. Do not leave your small child unattended during meals.

Never carry or handle hot liquids around your baby.

Water safety

Drowning is the second leading cause of injury deaths among US children ages 1 to 4 years and the fifth leading cause of injury deaths among children younger than 1 year.

- **Never leave your child alone in the bathtub, hot tub or backyard pool - even for a second.** If you must leave for any reason, take your child with you. Young children can drown very quickly in a small amount of water. When giving baby a bath, use a plastic dish pan or infant tub with a non-skid mat to keep your baby from slipping. Always test the water with your elbow first to avoid burning the baby's delicate skin (Picture 3). See Helping Hand *Bathing Your Baby,* HH-IV-2.

Picture 3 Never leave your child alone in the tub – even for a second.

- Hot water heaters should be set at 120 degrees F to avoid burns.

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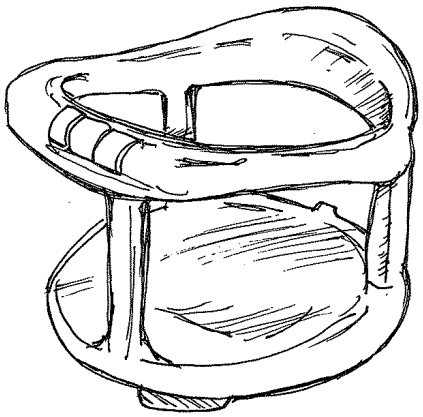
Water safety, continued

- Babies have drowned while using bath seats (Picture 4), so you should always keep your baby within your reach. If you do use a bath seat, stop using it when your baby is old enough to start pulling up to a standing position. Bath seats can tip over and infants and toddlers can climb out. The seat can come loose from the suction devices that attach the seat to the bathtub bottom. Baby bath seats are not safety devices and do not take the place of adult supervision.
- Do not leave buckets or inflatable pools around with water in them. Babies can fall in headfirst and drown.

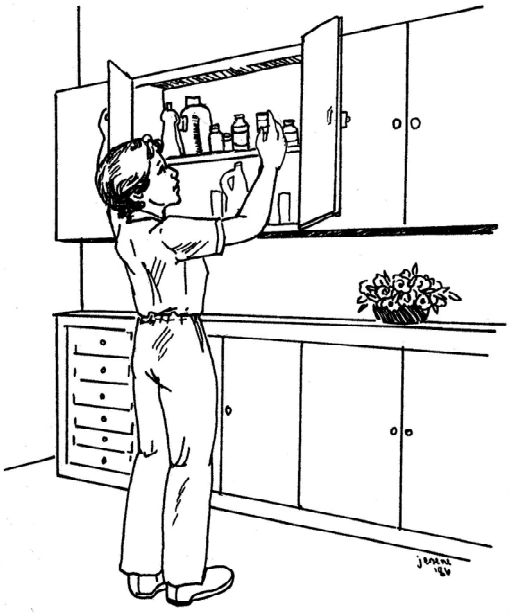


Picture 4 Infant bath seats are not safety devices.

When Baby Starts to Crawl

- When your baby starts to crawl or walk, long or sharp objects such as spoons, lollipops, or Popsicle sticks can be harmful. If he falls while the item is in his mouth or near the eyes, it could hurt him.
- Outlet covers should be put in unused outlets and furniture should be secured to walls to avoid the toddler pulling it over and causing serious injury. Electric wires should be secured to the floor or under rugs to prevent injury.
- Safety gates should be placed at the top and bottom of the stairs and 2nd floor windows should remain locked or have a window guard on them to prevent children from falling through the screen. Furniture should be moved away from windows so small children cannot climb up and fall out the window.
- Poison-proof your home (refer to the Helping Hand, HH-IV-30 *Poisoning Prevention*,). If you carry medicine, cigarettes or lighters in your purse, keep the purse out of your toddler's reach. Move cleaning products and medicines to high cupboards or put safety latches on low cupboards (Picture 5).

Many houseplants are dangerous if eaten. If you don't know if your houseplants are safe or if you think someone has eaten or drunk something poisonous, call the Central Ohio Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 (TTY 866-688-0088).



Picture 5 Put household cleaners and medicines out of baby's reach.