NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL℠

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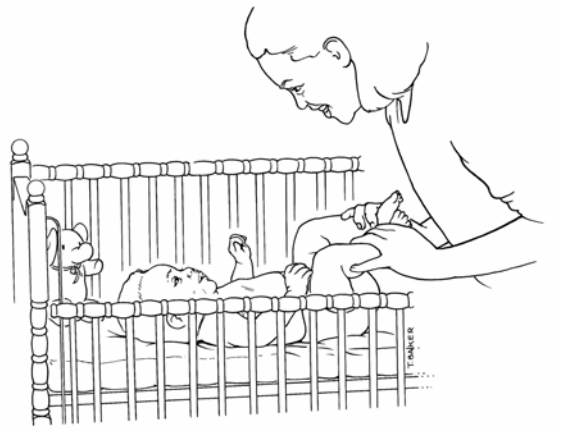
HOME SAFETY FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

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** - Crib spindles should be no more than 2-3/8 inches apart (this is about the width of a dollar bill). Check to see that the drop side rails lock securely in place when raised or lowered. Don't put a pillow in the crib. Baby doesn't need it and it can smother the baby. Make sure there are no dangling cords from window blinds near the crib within baby's reach. Don't use an old crib that has been repainted. The paint may contain lead that could harm a baby if the rails are chewed. Make sure the sides of the playpen lock securely.
- **High Chair** - When your baby is 5 or 6 months old and can sit up without support, she 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 the safety strap when your baby is in the high chair, but never leave her alone in the chair - not even for a minute.
- **Infant Swing** - A fussy baby that cries a lot may be calmed by an infant swing. The swinging movement often soothes the baby. Always use the safety strap and never leave a baby alone in a swing.
- **Car Seat** - An approved car seat is the most important piece of equipment you can have for your baby's safety. Please refer to the Helping Hand, *Car Seat Safety*, HH-IV-14.



Picture 1 Check the space between the crib's rails.

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

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.

TOYS AND PETS

Don't leave your baby alone in a room with a dog, cat, or any uncaged pet. Even if your pet seems gentle, it could think your baby is a threat, and could harm her.

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TOYS AND PETS (continued)

Marbles, plastic bags, balloons, 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 or strings that could be swallowed.

Hold your baby when you feed her. 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.

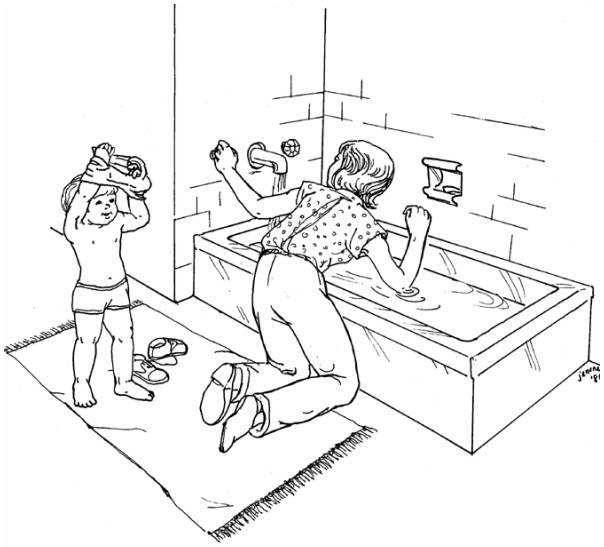
If your baby uses a pacifier, hold it in her mouth or gently prop it with a folded diaper. It's not safe to tie the pacifier to baby's clothes or around her neck.

Do not give your baby any of these foods until she 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.

WATER SAFETY

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 dishpan or infant tub with a non-skid mat to keep your baby from slipping. Always test the water with your elbow first (babies cannot take water as hot as adults can). Refer to the Helping Hand, *Bathing Your Baby*, HH-IV-2.
- Don't leave buckets or inflatable pools around with water in them. Babies can fall in headfirst and drown.



Picture 3 Never leave your child alone in the tub – even for a minute!

WHEN BABY STARTS TO CRAWL

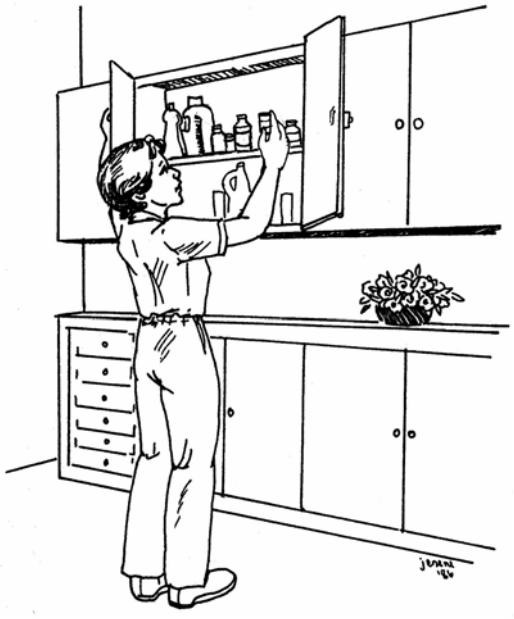
- When your baby starts to crawl or walk, long or sharp objects such as spoons, lollipops, or Popsicle sticks can be harmful. If he falls while the item is in his mouth or near the eyes, it could hurt him.
- Poison-proof your home. (Refer to the Helping Hand, *Poisoning Prevention*, HH-IV-30.) If you carry medicine, cigarettes or lighters in your purse, keep your purse out of your toddler's reach. Move cleaning products and medicines to high cupboards or put safety latches on low cupboards.

WHEN BABY STARTS TO CRAWL (continued)

Many houseplants are dangerous if eaten. If you don't know if your houseplants are safe, call the Central Ohio Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

- Put breakable objects out of the way until baby is older. Close doors to stairways or use child-guard gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs.
- Cover unused electrical outlets with safety plugs. Hide electrical cords under rugs or behind furniture.

It takes a lot of hard work - and seeing the child's world through his eyes - to child-proof your home to make it safe and keep your child from harm. But the rewards of a healthy, happy child are worth the effort!



Picture 4 Put household cleaners and medicines out of baby's reach.