

Did you know that in New Zealand around 13,000 children under five years of age are admitted to hospital each year with injuries?

Most injuries happen in and around the home, and many can be prevented by making simple changes to your environment. Remember, even with changes, you still need to make sure you supervise your baby to prevent injuries occurring.

Every baby is different; they will grow and learn in their own time. It's important that you keep one step ahead, making the environment safe for your baby. Babies can go from wriggling, sitting and crawling, to standing and walking in a matter of months.



## Use Plunket's top tips and checklist, over the page, to help keep your child safe.

### Car safety

Your baby must travel in a car seat every time they go in the car.

- The car seat should be on the back seat of the car, especially if there is an airbag in the front dashboard. A rapidly inflating airbag can seriously injure a baby in a rear-facing car seat.
- Baby's car seat is always rear facing so that the baby is looking out through the back window. Young children should be kept in a rear-facing seat for as long as possible — until around two years old, or as long as their car seat allows. This position protects the baby by helping support their head and spine.

### Strangulation

Long cords and clothing ties can be dangerous for your baby because they could get caught around their neck and cause choking or strangulation.

- Remember not to tie a dummy to your baby's clothes using string or ribbon.
- When putting your baby to bed, make sure their clothes have no ribbons or ties at the neck.

### Preventing drowning

It only takes 5cm of water for a baby to drown in. It can happen silently and very swiftly.

- Never leave your baby alone near water. A supervised baby is a safe baby. Keep a hand on your baby during bath time to keep them safe.
- Choosing not to use a bath seat is a good choice. They can be dangerous as they may tip and trap a baby under the water.

### Preventing burns

A baby's skin is very thin and burns easily. A single cup of hot water spilt over a baby is equal to a bucket of boiling water over an adult!

- Your hot water tap temperature should be around 50°C — if it feels too hot, talk to a plumber about how you can turn the temperature down.
- Fill your bath with cold water first. Then add hot water to bring it up to temperature.
- As your baby starts moving around the floor, cover fires and heaters with a guard to protect baby. Make sure the guard is attached to the wall. This will mean that your baby can't get around it, and there is no risk of it falling onto your baby.

Every household needs working smoke alarms and an escape plan in case of fire.

### Preventing sunburn

Sunburn is a danger to your baby. To help protect their skin, dress them in a wide brimmed hat, loose clothing, covering arms and legs too. Use sunscreen, take advantage of shade and restrict time in the sun between 10am and 4pm from September until April.

### Preventing poisoning

Infants place anything and everything into their mouths! By keeping all poisons including household cleaners and medications out of reach and out of sight in locked cupboards, you will reduce the chance of poisoning.

- Check the paint on older furniture, toys and houses. If the paint is lead-based, it can poison young children and babies.
- Check that poisons have child-resistant lids.

More infants are poisoned by liquid Paracetamol than any other medicine. Follow the instructions to make sure you give the correct amount of the correct strength of Paracetamol to your baby. Keep the 24 hour National Poisons Centre phone number beside your phone, 0800 POISON (764 766)

### Preventing falls

Falls are the biggest cause of injury to babies and young children. Your baby can wriggle, move and push against things, and could fall from any surface above ground level — sofas, change tables, stairs.

- It is safest to change baby on the floor.
- If you do use a change table, always use the safety strap and keep a hand on baby at all times. This means you'll need to have everything you need within easy reach.
- Stair guards at the top and bottom of stairs should be fitted before your child starts to crawl and move.
- Baby walkers can be dangerous for children. Their wheels allow a child to move quickly and they can easily tip, especially around stairs and uneven surfaces.
- Cots should be placed away from windows and blind cords. Not only do these encourage climbing but cords can be a choking and strangulation hazard as well.

### Preventing choking and suffocation

**Make sure you learn how to save your child's life if they choke. The RED section of your Well Child Tamariki Ora book has details of what to do if a child is choking.**

Your baby has to learn how to chew, swallow and breathe, all in the right order! Choking is a real danger for children, especially at this young age.



It's important to do as much as you can to make sure their environment is safe. Babies will put things into their mouth. It's the way they 'feel' and learn about the world around them.

- If you give your baby a bottle, make sure you hold them while they drink.
- Once your baby starts eating solids, food needs to be mushy and soft so it is easier to swallow.
- Your baby's bassinet or cot must have a mattress that fits the base, with no gaps around the edges. Any gap bigger than 2cm can trap limbs or baby's head and they could suffocate.
- The cot bars must be in good condition, and no less than 50mm or more than 95mm apart. Make sure there are no missing or broken bars where baby's head could get caught.

## Safety Checklist - use this checklist to make sure your baby is safe.

- I always use the 5-point harness in the high chair and buggy.  
*5-point harness can be purchased from some nursery stores.*
- I have stair guards at the top and bottom of the stairs.  
*Stair guards can be purchased from some hardware and nursery stores.*
- My baby is changed on the floor.
- The cot sides are kept up at all times and the cot is away from windows and blind cords.  
*Blind cord winders can be purchased from some hardware and nursery stores.*
- I never leave my baby alone on high surfaces.
- All small items and toys that baby might choke on are kept out of reach.
- I always fill the bath with cold water first and then add hot water to get a safe temperature.
- Baby is not on my knee when I am having a hot drink and I am careful not to pass a hot drink over baby's head.
- The table cloth is away so baby can't pull it off.
- The electric jug is kept well away from the edge of the bench and the cord doesn't hang over the edge.
- There is a fire guard around the fire and heaters in our home. *Fire guards can be purchased from some hardware stores.*
- Baby's clothing is snug-fitting to reduce the risk of it catching fire.
- There are working smoke alarms in our home and we have an escape plan in case of fire.  
*Smoke alarms can be purchased from supermarkets and hardware stores.*
- Older brothers and sisters don't supervise baby in the bath – that is an adult's responsibility.
- Baby isn't left alone in the bath, not even for a second.
- The swimming and spa pools are fenced correctly and there is a self-latching gate in good working order.  
*If you are unsure, the local council can provide information about fencing requirements.*
- I have the right type of car seat for my baby and it is fitted correctly, always rear facing.  
*A child restraint technician can assist you with car seat installation and questions. Technicians are listed at [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz).*
- Poisons, medicines, cleaning and dishwasher products are locked away up high, out of sight and out of reach.  
*Cupboard locks can be purchased from hardware and some nursery stores.*
- Emergency phone numbers, including the National Poisons Centre phone number 0800 POISON (764 766) are kept beside the phone.



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