

Preventing Falls in the Home



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Falls are the most common cause of injury in every age group. As children learn to crawl, walk, run, and begin to explore their environment, some falls and bumps are inevitable.

Understanding your child's development and adjusting their environment to suit them will help you plan ahead to help keep them safe. It is possible to reduce the risk of serious falls if we are well prepared.

Three factors may influence the seriousness of a fall:

1. **The height children can fall from:** the lower the height, the lower the danger.
2. **What children fall onto:** hard surfaces such as concrete and ceramic tiles.
3. **What children might hit as they fall:** sharp-edged furniture, such as coffee tables and bedside tables.

Furniture

- Children are at risk of falling even as young babies when they do not have control over their movement, e.g., a baby learning to roll.
- Never leave a baby alone on a bed, change table or piece of furniture. Always keep a hand on them.
- Use the change table safety strap every time.
- Always use the safety strap on highchairs and other infant seats.

- Make sure all furniture is sturdy and secured so that heavy objects cannot fall on your child. Fix furniture such as bookcases to the wall to prevent the child from pulling the item onto themselves.
- Put items your child is allowed to reach on the lowest shelves so they are less tempted to try climbing up the furniture.
- Move furniture with sharp corners away from areas where children are more likely to run around. If the furniture can't be moved, pad its corners with foam or install a corner protector.
- Make sure bunk beds have guard rails and a FIXED ladder. Children under the age of 9 should not sleep in top bunks. Trundle beds are recommended as safer.
- Make swinging chairs stationary and remove rocking chairs.
- Use chairs with arms, and if purchasing new pieces of furniture, make sure they have rounded corners.
- Keep in mind that children don't always use furniture the way it is meant to be used. Look at your home from your child's eye level. To a child a dresser may look like a ladder to climb on.

Stairs

- Make sure stairs have handrails on both sides that go from the top step to the bottom step.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Keep stairs clear of clutter and well lit.



child safety is no accident



Windows, glass doors and balconies

- Keep windows locked to a maximum opening of 12.5cm. Fly screens are not designed to prevent a child from falling through the window.
- Move chairs and furniture such as beds, cots or change tables away from windows. Don't store or display any item a child might climb near a window.
- Discourage children playing near windows and glass doors so they cannot fall onto the glass.
- Make glass doors visible using stickers, safety strips or decals. Consider using safety glass or shatter-resistant film on glass doors and low windows.
- Always supervise children on balconies.
- Keep children going on a balcony unsupervised by locking the door or by installing a safety guard across the entry to the balcony.
- Make sure there are no horizontal bars or footholds on the balcony.
- Move any items children could climb on away from the edge of the balcony. This includes pot plants, furniture and play equipment.

In the backyard

- Children can fall from climbing or tripping over items in the backyard. Remove ladders, tools and hoses should be removed from the yard and store them properly when not in use.
- Always supervise children when they are playing in the backyard or using the trampoline.
- Place play gyms and other climbing equipment on a soft surface such as grass.

Preventing falls from slips and trips

- Help children learn to put their toys away after playing with them. Injuries often occur when adults and children trip over toys.
- Wipe up spills as soon as possible.
- Use anti-skid mats under your rugs and floor coverings or roll them out of the way.
- Teach your child to sit in the bath and not to stand up. Use a rubber non slip mat or decals in the bath tub and shower.
- It is not recommended to use a baby walker. A young child may trip over a baby walker, fall out of the walker or fall down the stairs while using a walker.
- Night lights in the child's bedroom, the bathroom and hallway can help prevent falls at night.



Further information:

Refer to information sheets titled:

- *High Chair Safety*
- *Safety Gates and Locks*
- *Safety Glass*
- *Safe Play for Backyards*
- *Trampolines*
- *Baby Walker Safety*

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