



Safety for young children



Children being harmed in accidents is a major issue in Australia. It is the main reason children are admitted to hospital and the main cause of deaths.

Most accidents can be predicted which means they can be prevented. Injuries to young children often happen at home because this is where they spend most of their time.

The best way to keep children safe is to supervise them well. It is also important to make your home, yard and other environments safe for children.

Children and danger

Young children do not understand danger. In a risky situation they can't think ahead about what might happen or what to do. Teaching them about danger is important, but it is not enough to keep them safe. Adult supervision is always best.

It can help to:

- discuss safety with people who look after your children - grandparents, carers, babysitters
- keep emergency phone numbers where everyone can find them
- do a children's first aid course and learn about resuscitation. Keep a first aid kit in your home and car. These things are especially important if you live far from medical services.

Agree as a family what you will do and say about safety - it is important children get consistent messages.

Teaching about safety

Teach children about safety from an early age. From about 2 years, most children should start to follow safety rules but don't rely on them to act safely all the time.

It helps children learn about safety when you:

- model safe behaviours - children will copy what you do
- talk with them about what you are doing and why, in ways they will understand. Repeat safety rules often and consistently
- give them the chance to safely explore, take risks and have fun. They will gain new skills and confidence in their abilities.

Remember, being hurt or injured does not teach a young child not to do the same thing again. They haven't as yet learned about 'cause and effect'.

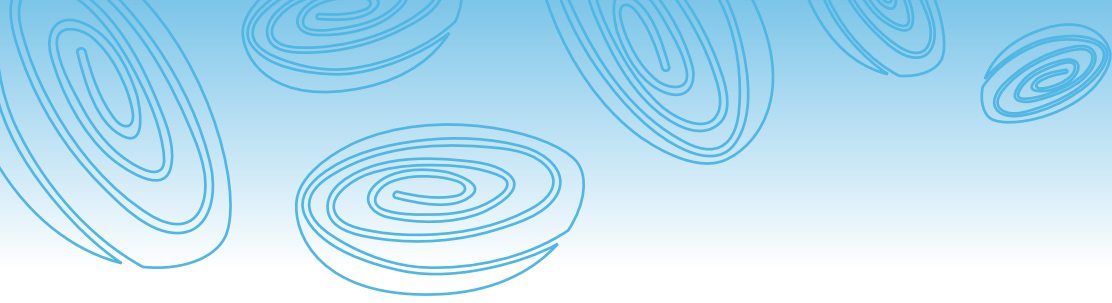
Keeping children safe

Falls

Falls are the major cause of toddler injury.

- Don't leave young children alone on beds, couches, change tables, high chairs or playground equipment.
- Use the harness in the high chair and pusher.
- Teach your toddler how to climb down from things at the same time they are learning to climb up, eg on chairs, couches, playground equipment, trees.
- Bunk beds are not recommended for children under 9 years.
- Use barriers to stop children getting into dangerous places, eg stairs.
- Lock doors and windows that open onto balconies. Make sure there are no objects close to balconies they could climb up on.
- Pad sharp corners on furniture.

Make sure furniture can't fall on children or be pulled over, eg TVs, bookcases.



Driveway safety

Many children are injured or killed by vehicles in home driveways.

- Always know where children are when vehicles are being moved. Adults should hold young children close so they can't run into danger.
- Don't let children play near driveways - put up barriers if you need to.
- Take children in the vehicle with you if you can't be sure of their safety.
- Don't rely on reversing cameras - there are 'blind spaces' and it can be hard to see small children.

Prevent driveway accidents. Always check young children are safe before moving a vehicle.

Traffic safety

- Make fences and gates child-proof so young children can't get near traffic.
- Hold on to young children near roads. They may be able to repeat rules about crossing roads but they don't really understand, no matter how many times you tell them.

Car safety

- Make sure children are in a properly fitted and approved restraint that is suitable for the child's age, size and weight on every trip.
- Always stop the car when you need to attend to your child in the back seat. Don't turn around to do this.
- Never use your mobile phone while driving.
- Make sure there is nothing loose on the dashboard, parcel shelf or floor. Safely secure heavy items in the back of a hatchback or station wagon. These items can cause harm in an accident.
- Never leave babies and children alone in cars. They can:
 - get bored and explore the car's knobs and buttons which can lead to dangers
 - become distressed or try to struggle free from seatbelts and get injured

- be in danger of someone trying to steal the car with them in it
- become seriously ill when temperatures in cars increase quickly.

Never leave children (or pets) alone in a car. Cars get very hot very quickly, even in cooler weather.

Drowning

Children can drown in only a few centimetres of water. It can happen quietly and as quickly as 20 seconds.

- Children should never be left alone around water. Actively supervise them in the bath, swimming pools (including paddle and inflatable pools), at the beach, near creeks, rivers and dams. Don't move away even for a short time or become distracted, eg by mobile phones.
- Make sure children can't get to buckets and other containers holding water. Keep a tight fitting lid on nappy buckets and place out of reach. The water and chemicals both pose a risk to young children.
- Swimming pools should be fenced with a self-closing, self-latching gate. There should be nothing near the fence that a child could climb up on. Contact your local council for fencing regulations.

It is important to teach your child to swim but it will not prevent drowning. Adult supervision is critical. Learn resuscitation - the first few minutes in an emergency can make the difference between life and death.

Scalds and burns

- Never have a hot drink while holding your child.
- Keep hot things well back from the edge of tables. Use non-slip placemats instead of tablecloths.
- Ensure electric cords of kettles, jugs and other appliances don't hang over the side of benches. Be careful of the dangling cord while ironing.



- Ensure your tap water is no hotter than 50°C - recommended bath water temperature is 38°C. Run cold water into the bath first, then the hot. Swish it around so there are no hot spots.
- Supervise to ensure your child doesn't turn on the hot tap.
- Dress children in low fire-risk clothing.
- Keep children away from hot cooking. Turn saucepan handles away from front of stove.
- Supervise children around barbeques, fires and heaters - use fire guards.
- Have a fire extinguisher or fire blanket in your home.

If a child has been scalded or burned put the area under cool running water for 20 minutes. Seek medical advice.

Poisoning

- The majority of poisonings are due to medications. Other poisons include household and garden products, cosmetics, alcohol and cigarettes.
- Keep all poisons locked away.
- Don't leave handbags where children can get into them, including visitors' bags - there may be medications, hand sanitisers or other poisons.
- Keep poisons in their original, labelled containers, never in food or drink containers.
- Don't refer to medicines or vitamins as 'lollies'.

If you think a child may have swallowed something, call the Poisons Information Centre on 131 126. Have the poison container handy.

Choking and suffocating

- Keep button batteries away from children. They can cause serious injury if swallowed.
- Make sure there are no small objects such as coins or pen tops lying around.
- Children can choke on hard foods such as raw carrot, apple or nuts. Give cooked or grated vegetables. Sit toddlers down to eat, and supervise them.
- Don't force your child to eat anything they don't want.
- Tie a knot in the middle of empty plastic bags so your child can't pull them over their head.
- Replace dummies before they are worn.
- Some old or antique cots and high chairs are not safe for young children. Use a cot that meets Australian standards.

Cords on curtains and blinds need to be short or secured up high and out of reach. They are a strangling risk, especially if children can reach them from their cot.

Toys and play

- Check toys and play equipment regularly for sharp edges, splinters and loose parts.
- The surface under climbing frames and swings should be soft and impact absorbing.
- Toys for young children should not have small, loose parts that can be broken off and swallowed. Keep older children's toys with small pieces and small batteries away from toddlers.
- Baby walkers often cause injuries and should not be used.

Electrocution

Have a circuit breaker installed in your fuse box or switchboard. It will switch off the power if there is an electrical fault.

- Put covers over power points to stop toddlers poking things into them.
- Don't use electric blankets for young children.
- Be careful of electrical appliances near water - it is easy to get electrocuted.
- Use only wall mounted or ceiling mounted heaters in bathrooms. Install wall mounted heaters up high.





Pets

Having a pet can help children learn to be responsible and caring. It is important to choose the right pet for your family and always supervise young children around pets.

- Young children are at risk from dog attacks. Most attacks are by dogs that children know.
- Keep children away from dogs that are feeding, sleeping, unwell or have pups. Any dog can bite or attack a child.

Farm safety

Farms are both a home and a workplace and there are dangers for children, eg heavy machinery, tools, vehicles, water, silos, wells, troughs, firearms.

- Provide a fenced area for young children to play, away from hazards.
- Always supervise children around water. Remove or secure ladders on tanks so children can't get into them. Cover wells and troughs with lids or mesh.
- Lock chemicals away.
- Supervise children around farm animals and working dogs.
- Provide age appropriate bikes and safety gear - quad bikes are not suitable for children under 16 years. Don't let children ride in the back of a Ute.

Sun protection

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun easily burns a child's sensitive skin. When the UV level is 3 or above, protect your child's skin by making sure they:

- are in the shade whenever possible
- wear cool, loose clothing that covers as much skin as possible
- wear a hat that shades their face, back of the neck, eyes and ears
- use sunscreen (SPF30 or higher)
- wear sunglasses if practical to protect their eyes.

Passive smoking

- Make your home and car smoke-free and avoid smoking around children.
- It is illegal in South Australia to smoke in a car with a child under 16 years.

Smoking around children harms their health. Children are more likely to smoke if they see you smoking.

Violence and abuse

Children are harmed, and some even die as a result of family violence, abuse and neglect. If you think a child is in danger, call the Police on 000 or the Child Abuse Report Line on 131 478.

Want more information?

Emergency

Police, Fire, Ambulance: 000
Police attendance: 131 444
Poisons Information Line: 131 126
Child Abuse Report Line: 131 478

Parent Helpline

Phone 1300 364 100
For advice on child health and parenting

Kidsafe SA

Phone 8161 6318
For child safety and injury prevention information. Provides a 'Home safety checklist' to help ensure your home, yard and farm are safe for young children. Has information on:

- driveway safety
- farm safety
- safety in cars and on the road
- child car restraints
- preventing drowning
- preventing burns and scalds
- preventing falls
- preventing choking
- preventing poisoning
- safe infant sleeping
- dogs and children

Located opposite the Play Deck, Level 1, Zone A, Women's and Children's Hospital, North Adelaide
www.kidsafesa.com.au

Child and Family Health Service (CaFHS)

Phone 1300 733 606, 9am-4:30pm, Mon-Fri for an appointment. See www.cyh.com for child health and parenting information

Raising Children Network

For parenting information www.raisingchildren.net.au

Parenting SA

For more Parent Easy Guides including 'Living with toddlers', 'Sleep: children 0-6 years', 'Safe technology use', 'Cyber safety', 'Child abuse' and 'Family violence' www.parenting.sa.gov.au



**Government of
South Australia**

Parenting SA

A partnership between the Department of Human Services and the Women's and Children's Health Network.

Ph: 08 8303 1660
www.parenting.sa.gov.au

Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia.

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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Revised:01/2020.