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## Child safety and injury prevention

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## Summary

- Always dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- Children and babies often need different emergency treatment than adults, so take a paediatric first aid course to keep your skills up to date.
- Keep your child under close supervision.
- You can reduce the risk of injuries by making a few practical changes to your home.

You can never completely ‘child-proof’ your home. You can, however, dramatically reduce the risk of injuries by making a few changes to your home and keeping your child under constant supervision.

Emergency medical treatment for young children or babies isn’t always the same as for adults. All parents and carers should ensure they have current training in paediatric (child) first aid. Plan to do a CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) refresher course once a year; first aid practices sometimes change and there is a tendency to forget when skills are not used regularly.

**Never hesitate to call an ambulance if your child is severely injured, has collapsed, stopped breathing, is fitting or is suffering an anaphylactic reaction.** Throughout Australia, the emergency number to ring is triple zero (000).

## Child safety to prevent drowning

Drowning is one of the leading causes of unintentional injury death for children under five years of age. One and two year olds are most at risk as they are more mobile than infants, but are still developing motor skills and cannot judge hazards.

The majority of toddler drowning deaths in Victoria in the last decade (2003–2013) occurred in home pools (34 per cent), bathtubs (29 per cent), dams (11 per cent) and creeks (9 per cent). For every toddler who drowns, there are ten non-fatal drowning or immersion incidents requiring hospital treatment. All Australian swimming pools are required by law to be fenced.

Safety measures to prevent drowning include:

- **Never leave your child alone in the bath** – children can drown quickly and silently in a few centimetres of water.
- **Actively supervise** – make sure children are in constant visual eye contact and within arm’s reach of an adult at all times when in and around water.
- **Be prepared** – be within arm’s reach of your child with all of your attention, all of the time. Be prepared with everything you need for bathing your child before entering the bathroom.
- **Empty water** from the baths buckets and wading pools immediately after use, and close the bathroom door when it is not in use.
- At the beach, teach children to swim between the flags.
- It is illegal for pools and spas not to be fenced off. Remove any objects which can be used to climb over the fence.
- At the public swimming pool, always watch them. An adult must be within arm’s reach of children under five years of age at all times. Remember, lifeguards are not babysitters.
- Secure wire mesh of an appropriate rigid gauge over fishponds, aquariums, etc.
- Teach your child to swim. Lessons are recommended from four years of age.
- Have a resuscitation chart by the phone and on the pool fence.
- Parents and caregivers should do a first aid course, and learn infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in case of an emergency.

## Child safety to prevent falls

Falling is the most common cause of injury for children of all ages. The seriousness of an injury depends on the height the child falls from, the surface the child falls onto and what the child may hit as they fall. A standing and toddling baby has frequent minor falls. To minimise falls injuries, look at the environment from your child’s level.

Safety suggestions include:

- **Remove tripping hazards** – create a clear area for play by removing tripping hazards from the floor, such as toys, rugs and electrical cords. Pad sharp corners of benches and tables or remove them from the play area.
- Never carry your baby around in a bouncinette or rocker chair. Put bouncinettes on the floor, not on a table or high surface.
- Change tables should have ends and sides that are raised at least 100 mm to prevent your baby from falling. Keep one hand on your baby at all times. Have everything ready before you place your baby on the change table.
- Never leave a baby unsupervised on a change table. Consider changing your baby on a large towel on the floor.
- Do not use baby walkers. They give a young child the mobility to put themselves in danger quickly and unexpectedly.

- Always use a full-body (five-point) safety harness in prams, strollers, high chairs and shopping trolleys.
- Don't allow a child to walk or run while carrying sharp objects such as scissors.
- **Safety gates** help prevent falls – use a safety gate at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Use a sensor light for stairs and steps.
- Put non-skid rubber mats in the bath and shower.
- Make sure swings, slides and climbing equipment have soft fall material underneath, to a depth of 300 mm. Bunk beds should only be used by children over nine years.

### Window safety – preventing falls

Make sure that a child can't open and fall out of any windows. Safety suggestions to prevent falls from windows include:

- Keep furniture away from windows.
- Install window locks to prevent window from opening wide.
- Insect screens do not prevent children from falling. Install window guards.

### Child safety to prevent burns

By law, all homes must have working smoke alarms installed. Change the batteries in smoke alarms every year at the end of the daylight saving period and test them monthly. Keep children away from fires, flames, hot surfaces and hot liquids.

Safety suggestions include:

- Install a fixed guard at least 70 cm high around all heaters, open fires, radiators and potbelly stoves. If any surface is so hot that you cannot leave your own hand on it for ten seconds, it needs a guard to prevent contact burns to young children.
- Lock matches, cigarette lighters and flammable liquids away and out of reach of children.
- Keep a fire blanket and a dry powder extinguisher in the kitchen, and make sure you know how to use them. Fire blankets must be stored at least one metre from the stove. Your fire extinguisher is best located near the kitchen entrance. It is important to always have the extinguisher between your exit point and source of possible fire. (If you are not confident or able to use either the extinguisher or fire blanket and you experience a fire, **evacuate immediately**, closing the door behind you as you go).
- Install a safety switch to prevent electrocution.
- Use power boards as they are safer than double adapters.
- Choose close-fitting nightwear for children with the label 'styled to reduce fire danger' or 'low fire danger'.
- Prepare a home fire escape plan and practise it with all the family. Make sure there are two ways out of each room where possible, as well as out of the house.
- Teach your child to stop, drop, and cover and roll on the floor if their clothing catches fire. Also teach them to crawl low in smoke to the nearest exit. This will help to avoid smoke and poisonous gases. Reinforce this with your child when you are practising a fire drill.

In an emergency, call triple zero (000). For information about fire safety in your home, call the Metropolitan Fire Brigade on (03) 9665 4464 or the Country Fire Authority on (03) 9262 8444.

In case of burns and scalds, hold injured area under cold running water for 20 minutes. Seek medical attention.

### Child safety to prevent poisoning

Young children tend to put every object they find into their mouths. In Victoria, at least eight children a day receive medical attention after swallowing a poison. Children under five years of age are most at risk, especially those between one and three years. Household products and medicines are the most common cause of poisoning in children. The most serious poisonings usually involve medicines.

Safety suggestions to prevent poisoning in children include:

- Keep **all** medicines and household products out of the reach and out of sight of your child. Put them safely away immediately after purchase or after use.
- Only remove a medicine from its packaging when you are just about to take or administer it – do not leave medicines unattended on benches or other places your child could reach.
- Store medicines and dangerous household products in cabinets or cupboards with a child-resistant lock at least 1.5 m above the ground. Dangerous products include drain cleaners, oven cleaners, dishwasher tablets and powders, bleaches, paints, many gardening products and other household chemicals. Child-resistant locks can be installed on most cupboards.
- Read warning labels and directions for use carefully.
- Leave medicines and chemicals in their original containers – do not transfer them into other containers such as drink bottles.
- Put all chemicals, medicines and cleaning products away immediately after use.
- Clean out your medicine cupboard regularly. Take unwanted and out-of-date medicines to your nearest pharmacy for proper disposal.
- Empty containers of liquid medicines and household products should be rinsed with water before they are thrown out.
- Refer to medicines by their proper names. They are not lollies.
- Children tend to imitate adults, so avoid taking medicines in their presence.
- Visitors' bags may contain medicines. Keep them well out of the reach of children.
- Avoid distractions when administering medicines; double check before administering them.
- Parents should establish a 'checking system' with each other to avoid giving double doses of medicine to children.
- Be aware that the incidence of childhood poisoning increases when usual household routines are disrupted, such as moving house, being on holiday or having visitors.
- Some garden plants are poisonous if eaten. [The Victorian Poisons Information Centre](#) has a list of poisonous plants on their website.
- Teach your children never to pick up or touch any insects they find in the garden (such as bees, wasps or spiders).

It is important to stay calm. If you think you or someone in your care may have been poisoned, given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine, or has been bitten or stung by a bee, wasp, spider, jellyfish, etc., immediately take the container and the child to the phone and ring the Victorian Poisons Information Centre on 131 126 for advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Child safety to prevent scalds

Burn injuries, including scald and flame burns, can result in permanent scarring, disfigurement and disability. Hot liquids cause two out of three burns in small children. The more serious injuries result in long and repeated periods of hospital treatment, many skin graft operations and ongoing psychological trauma. A severe scald can kill a small child, since their skin is much more sensitive than the skin of an adult.

Safety suggestions include:

- Keep children's play areas away from your kitchen.
- Keep hot drinks away from children and never have a child on your lap while you have a hot drink.
- Keep children away from hot foods and liquids.
- Put all hot liquids and food in the centre of the table, or to the back of the bench away from the edges. Don't use a tablecloth – children can pull the edge of the tablecloth and spill hot fluids over themselves. Use non-slip placemats instead.
- Don't carry hot drinks when children are playing on the floor. When busy in the kitchen, use a playpen or safety gate to avoid your child getting underfoot.
- When running a bath for your child, run the cold water first and then add hot water to a safe temperature of 37–38 °C.
- Avoid hanging cords on electric kettles and other appliances. Keep all cords well away from the edge. Use short or curly cords or a cordless jug.
- Turn all pot handles in and away from the edge of the stove. Use the back hotplates whenever possible.
- Install a stove guard around hotplates to protect young children from scalds.

## Microwave safety and children

Microwaving causes uneven heating within fluids and the temperature continues to rise for a short time after food is removed from the microwave. This makes it easy to misjudge the temperature of food or drink.

Safety suggestions include:

- Make sure the microwave is out of reach of children.
- Take care when heating liquids in a microwave. If no alternative is available, heat the bottle standing up without a cap for around 30 seconds (for a full bottle at full power). Replace the cap and teat, shake gently and allow the bottle to stand for 10 to 20 seconds.
- Test the temperature before offering a bottle to your baby. Remember, if the liquid feels very warm to you, it is too hot for your baby to drink.

## Choking and harm caused by swallowing objects

Child safety to prevent swallowing and choking on objects includes:

- Being aware of foods that can choke children, such as lollies, apple, meat and nuts.
- Avoiding objects smaller than a D size battery, as they can choke children under three years.
- Encouraging children to sit calmly and not eat their meal too quickly.
- Checking toys regularly for any small parts that can become a choking hazard.

## Button batteries

Button batteries are found in many common household items including remote controls, calculators, bathroom scales, car keys, toys, watches, talking books/cards and flameless candles.

These coin-sized batteries can cause severe life-threatening injuries if swallowed by children.

Parents and caregivers can take steps to protect children from swallowing button batteries:

- **Identify** – identify items with button batteries in them
- **Secure** – secure the battery compartment of those items
- **Elevate** – keep items containing button batteries out of reach of children
- **Eliminate** – dispose of button batteries and items containing them (including packaging) safely.

If you think your child has swallowed or inserted a button battery, call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 for advice immediately.

More information about button battery safety is available on the [Kidsafe Victoria website](#).

## Blinds and curtain cords

Go through every room in your home and check for any blinds or curtains with long cords that are either loose or looped. This includes any cords that are within children's reach at floor level or near furniture they can climb on. Remember:

- Do not put children's cots, beds, highchairs or playpens near a window where children can reach the blind or curtain cords. The cords can get around children's necks and strangle them while they are playing or sleeping.
- Do not place sofas, chairs, tables, shelves or bookcases near windows with corded blinds or curtains. Young children often like to climb onto furniture to look out the window. If they can reach the cords, they may quickly become entangled in them, lose their footing and suffer strangulation or serious injuries.
- Make sure blind and curtain cords are not hanging anywhere within children's reach. Loose cords can easily wrap around and strangle children who are jumping, playing or climbing nearby.
- Always supervise children in any rooms with reachable blind or curtain cords. Accidental strangulation can happen very quickly, so never leave children alone in these rooms, even for a short while.

For information about first aid courses:

- [The Royal Children's Hospital Community Information team \(formerly Safety Centre\)](#) Tel. (03) 9345 5085
- [Life Saving Victoria](#) Tel. (03) 9676 6900

- [Metropolitan Fire Brigade](#) Tel. (03) 9665 4464
- [Country Fire Authority](#) Tel. (03) 9262 8444

## Where to get help

- Your doctor
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Victorian Poisons Information Centre Tel. 13 11 26 – seven days a week, 24 hours a day – for advice when poisoning or suspected poisoning occurs, mistakes with medicine, bites and stings (bees, wasps, spiders, jellyfish etc) and poisoning prevention information
- [The Royal Children’s Hospital Community Information team \(formerly Safety Centre\)](#) Tel. (03) 9345 5085
- The Royal Children’s Hospital, Kids Health Info Bookshop Tel. (03) 9345 6429

## Things to remember

- Always dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- Children and babies often need different emergency treatment than adults, so take a paediatric first aid course to keep your skills up to date.
- Keep your child under close supervision.
- You can reduce the risk of injuries by making a few practical changes to your home.

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[Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...](#)
- [Motor vehicle crashes](#)

[Motor vehicle crashes continue to be one of the biggest killers and causes of injury in Victoria...](#)

- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)

[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety, and become safer road users...](#)

- [Safe driving](#)

[Safe driving is up to every individual on the road. You can be a safe driver by being alert and ready to take action at any time...](#)

- [Scooters and child safety](#)

[Scooters can travel at fast speeds and falls and collisions are disturbingly common...](#)

- [Travel safety tips](#)

[You can reduce your risk of being mugged or robbed while travelling by taking a few simple precautions...](#)

#### **Fire, flood and other disasters**

- [After a flood – animal and insect related hazards](#)

[When returning to a flood-affected area, remember that wild animals, including rats, mice, snakes or spiders, may be trapped in your home, shed or garden...](#)

- [After a flood – returning home safely](#)

[When returning to your home after a flood, take precautions to reduce the possibility of injury, illness or disease...](#)

- [Bushfire aftermath - safety tips](#)

[Houses, sheds and other buildings or structures burnt in a bushfire can leave potential health hazards...](#)

- [Bushfire preparation advice](#)

[Being prepared for a bushfire helps you cope better in an emergency...](#)

- [Bushfire smoke](#)

[Bushfire smoke can reduce air quality in rural and urban areas, and may affect people's health...](#)

- [Emergencies - floods](#)

[You and your family should work out an emergency plan in case of flood...](#)

- [Smoke from planned burns](#)

[Bushfire smoke can reduce air quality in rural and urban areas, and may affect people's health. Planned burns are an important part of reducing the risk of bushfires...](#)

- [Talking to children about bushfire risk](#)

[Children can be affected by information regarding bushfire risk and they may become concerned about issues of safety. Talking to children openly in a way that suits their age, while also involving...](#)

- [Urban flash floods - FAQs](#)

[Urban flash flooding can happen quickly and without warning. Heavy rain causes runoff to collect in dips, car parks and roads, and there is a risk of contamination, injury and disease...](#)

#### **Work and environmental safety**

- [Asbestos and your health](#)

[When asbestos fibres become airborne, people working with asbestos may inhale particles which remain in their lungs...](#)

- [Cadmium](#)

[Low-level exposure to cadmium over a long period of time may cause health effects because cadmium can accumulate in the body...](#)

- [Computer-related injuries](#)

[Using a computer can contribute to problems of the muscles and joints, eyestrain and overuse injuries of the arms, wrists and hands...](#)

- [Eye safety at work](#)

[Wearing eye protection appropriate for the task can significantly reduce the risk of injury...](#)

- [Ladder safety matters – Mick \(video\)](#)

[Stop and think before you use a ladder...](#)

- [Ladder safety matters – Nick \(video\)](#)  
[Stop and think before you use a ladder...](#)
- [Ladders Safety Matters - Paul \(video\)](#)  
[We can keep our pools safe, healthy, and most importantly fun...](#)
- [Look after your health at harvest time \(slideshow\)](#)  
[Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...](#)
- [Q fever](#)  
[Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats...](#)
- [Shiftwork](#)  
[A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents...](#)
- [Skin cancer - protecting outdoor workers](#)  
[People who work outdoors are in one of the highest risk groups for skin cancer...](#)
- [Workplace conflict](#)  
[A clash of personalities at work is bad for business, because it can affect productivity and increase absenteeism...](#)
- [Workplace safety - confined spaces](#)  
[Around 60 per cent of people killed in confined spaces were trying to rescue someone else...](#)
- [Workplace safety - dangerous goods](#)  
[Dangerous goods are objects or substances that are potentially harmful to people or the environment, such as explosives or chemicals...](#)
- [Workplace safety - hazardous substances](#)  
[A hazardous substance can be inhaled, splashed onto the skin or eyes, or swallowed...](#)
- [Workplace safety - infection control](#)  
[The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...](#)
- [Workplace safety - manual handling injuries](#)  
[A person can be injured when handling objects in a variety of ways including pulling, pushing, holding or restraining...](#)
- [Workplace safety - noise pollution](#)  
[There are many ways to reduce exposure to excessive noise in the workplace...](#)
- [Workplace safety - overuse injuries](#)  
[Occupational overuse syndrome, also known as RSI, is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures...](#)
- [Work-related fatalities](#)  
[In 2013, 196 people lost their lives due to work-related accidents in Australia. Find out more about your industry and which organisations help to prevent work-related deaths in your workplace...](#)

#### **Farm safety**

- [Chemicals and spray drift](#)  
[Sprayed chemicals can drift over neighbouring properties or water sources, and can affect human health, animals or the environment...](#)
- [Farm safety and handling agrichemicals](#)  
[To reduce risks on the farm, use hazardous chemicals according to manufacturer guidelines or replace them with less dangerous options...](#)
- [Farm safety – children](#)  
[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)
- [Farm safety - confined spaces](#)  
[Any confined space on a farm can be dangerous and the threat may not be apparent until it's too late...](#)
- [Farm safety - crush injuries](#)

[Hand and finger injuries are the most common crush injuries that occur on Victorian farms...](#)

- [Farm safety - falls](#)

[Falls are a common farm hazard, especially for older farmers...](#)

- [Farm safety - handling animals](#)

[Any animal-handling practices can increase the risk of injury to farmers, farm workers and the animal...](#)

- [Farm safety - machinery](#)

[Poorly used or faulty machinery is a major cause of death and injury on farms...](#)

- [Farm safety - manual handling](#)

[Farm workers often experience muscle and ligament strain, but good manual handling techniques and safe work habits can prevent most injuries...](#)

- [Farm safety - quad bikes](#)

[Most injuries and deaths involving quad bikes \(all-terrain vehicles\) are caused by the bike rolling over the rider...](#)

- [Farm safety - risks and hazards](#)

[Farms can be dangerous places for workers and family members, but the risks can be reduced...](#)

- [Farm safety – sheep and shearing](#)

[Handling sheep can cause manual injuries and badly designed shearing sheds can present a range of hazards...](#)

- [Look after your health at harvest time \(slideshow\)](#)

[Farmer health, wellbeing and safety are often neglected when facing the pressures of harvest. Simple safety measures can dramatically reduce the risk of injury and illness...](#)

## Related Information

- [No Jab No Play](#)

No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...

- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...

- [A Healthy Start to School](#)

A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...

- [Asthma explained](#)

Asthma cannot be cured, but with good management people with asthma can lead normal, active lives...

- [Farm safety – children](#)

Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...

[Home](#)

## Related information on other websites

- [Child Safety Australia](#)
- [Kidsafe Victoria](#)
- [Metropolitan Fire Brigade \(MFB\) - Home Fire Safety](#)
- [Play it Safe by the Water Victoria](#)

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