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Child safety – at home

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Summary

- Home is the most common place for children to be injured.
- Always make sure you know where your children are before you reverse out of a driveway.
- The best way to reduce the risk of injury in the home is either to remove a potential hazard or dangerous item, or add a suitable safety product.
- Many safety products are available, but it helps to speak to an expert about your specific needs.

Home is a special place when you are growing up. It's a place to explore, to have adventures and to play. The home is also the most common place for young children to be injured.

Most injuries are predictable and preventable. Try to make the home environment as safe as possible before your baby arrives and again before your child starts crawling.

You must always make sure the inside of your home is safe. You must also consider hazards found in outdoor areas, particularly the driveway, front and rear gardens, pool and barbeque areas, garden sheds, play areas and cubby houses.

Driveway safety

In 2015, 85 children presented to The Royal Children's Hospital with driveway-related injuries. Ninety-two per cent of these accidents occurred in the driveway of the child's home – the rest occurred in the driveways of relatives or friends. Most of the drivers were unaware a child was near their vehicle.

Young children are particularly at risk (especially under six years of age) because:

- they can be impossible to see from inside a car, especially if they are immediately behind it
- they can move quickly and are unpredictable
- the rear and side vision from many cars has a large 'blind spot' which can easily obscure a child (in some cars this can be more than 15 metres)
- even if a car has parking sensors or a reversing camera fitted, children may not be noticed until it is too late to stop. During the school holiday period disruptions to the usual family routines (for example, visitors coming to visit your home) can increase children's exposure and the risk of a driveway run-over occurring. The basic message, especially for parents of children under six, is always make sure you know where your children are before you reverse out of a driveway.

Make your home safe for toddlers

One of the best ways to reduce the risk of injury is to make some physical changes around the house. Look at your home and think about what the obvious risks and hazards are. Remove the risk or hazard, if possible, or add a safety product to minimise the chance of injury. For example, if you have a low table with sharp corners, you can attach corner covers or you can simply remove and temporarily store the table elsewhere.

To assist you with identifying some possible hazards in and around the home, download the free [Royal Children's Hospital home safety checklist](#).

Before considering what safety products you need, remember you can always change the layout of a room to help create a safer environment. If you are building or renovating your house, you can incorporate specific safety features in your design. Incorporating safety features at the design point in the majority of cases will be much more economical than to amend and make safer at a later time. The time to start making some changes or additions is well before your baby begins to crawl.

Choose carefully from a range of safety products

There is a range of safety products available. Be selective and choose safety products that:

- suit your particular situation
- are appropriate to your child's age
- are affordable.

Some products are essential for your home, such as a first aid kit. Others are mandatory (required by law), such as smoke alarms and a pool fence.

Door and stove barriers

Use a door barrier or a safety gate to keep a young child out of the kitchen, particularly at busy times such as when dinner is being prepared. A safety gate or barrier will allow children to play safely in an adjacent room, and enable you to see what's happening on the other side.

Door barriers are also an important safety feature for both the top and bottom of stairs. You can buy barriers to fit doorways or open spaces of various sizes.

One of the most dangerous parts of the house is the kitchen. Injuries relating to the stove and oven can be very serious. A stove guard fitted around the hot plates can protect children from serious scald or burn injury caused when pots and pans are pulled down on top of them. Stove knob covers can be purchased to make it difficult for a child to turn a stove or oven on. Alternatively, you may be able to remove the knobs altogether.

Locks and safety catches

There are many dangerous chemicals and cleaning products kept in the kitchen, laundry and medicine cabinet. Make sure these are put away immediately after use and stored in a locked or out-of-reach cupboard at a height greater than 1.5 metres.

There are various locks, catches and latches that can be attached to a variety of cupboards and drawers. A plastic catch may be sufficient to use on a cupboard or drawer containing crockery. However, a plastic catch is not adequate if the items are poisonous. A magnetic lock or 'elbow catch' offers greater protection. Alternatively, you can purchase a small lockable poisons cabinet to store medications and a large lockable cabinet to store cleaning products.

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.

Other safety products

There are many more safety products available for purchase, including:

- Safety tap caps – are designed to prevent children from turning on a hot tap (which results in household hot water burns) and can be easily installed without the assistance of a plumber or handyman.
- Finger protection strips – are an innovative yet simple design to prevent children from trapping their fingers between the door and door hinge.
- Power point covers – prevent electrocution from open power sockets by covering the point and preventing objects being poked into them.
- Doorknob covers – make it difficult for children to open a door and prevent them from entering a room.
- Blind cord windups – can help prevent strangulation by ensuring long cords are not left dangling.
- Foam doorstoppers – help protect little fingers from being jammed in doors.

The Royal Children's Hospital Kids Health Info Bookshop has a comprehensive range of specialised safety products and parenting books. Staff can also offer individual advice to families.

Home safety check

For a more detailed step-by-step guide to safety in your home and surroundings, complete the [Home Safety Checklist](#), which is available from The Royal Children's Hospital Community Information team (formerly Safety Centre).

Remember that every home is different, so contact the RCH Community Information team (formerly Safety Centre) telephone advisory line on (03) 9345 5085 for advice on specific action plans and safety products for your home.

Where to get help

- [The Community Information team](#) (formerly Safety Centre) Telephone Advisory Line, The Royal Children's Hospital Tel. (03) 9345 5085
- [Kids Health Info Bookshop](#), The Royal Children's Hospital Tel. (03) 9345 6429
- [Kidsafe Victoria](#) - The Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia

[References](#)

- *Home safety* 2007, Child Health and Safety Resource Centre, The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. [More information here](#).

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Babies and toddlers basics

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[For children diagnosed with a disability, getting the support they need as early as possible will give them the best chance of minimising the long-term effects of the disability...](#)
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- [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...](#)
- [Parenting services](#)
[Parenting is one of the most important tasks we undertake but it doesn't always come naturally...](#)
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- [Baby bath - preparation and safety \(video\)](#)
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[Detail on baby skin care from Royal Women's Hospital...](#)
- [Jaundice in babies](#)
[If your baby is full-term and healthy, mild jaundice is nothing to worry about and will resolve by itself within a week or so...](#)
- [Newborn bloodspot screening](#)

[Every newborn baby in Australia is offered a newborn bloodspot screening test to identify those at risk of rare, but serious, medical conditions...](#)

- [Phenylketonuria \(PKU\)](#)

[PKU is an inherited disorder that prevents the normal breakdown of a protein found in some foods...](#)

- [Phototherapy at Home](#)

[Jaundice is very common in newborns, so it's nothing to be too worried about. Treatment is very easy and safe. It all happens using blue light from a special blanket that you wrap your baby in. The...](#)

- [Premature babies](#)

[Sometimes premature labour can be delayed to increase a baby's chance of survival...](#)

- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)

[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)

[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)

Feeding your baby

- [Asthma - pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)

[Pregnant women with asthma need to continue to take their asthma medication as it is important to the health of both mother and baby that the mother's asthma is well managed...](#)

- [Baby care - weaning](#)

[Be guided by your baby and let them set the pace when weaning and introducing solid foods...](#)

- [Bottle feeding - nutrition and safety](#)

[Breastmilk or commercial infant formula is necessary for all babies less than 12 months...](#)

- [Breastfeeding](#)

[Breastfeeding positioning and attachment come naturally to some babies and mothers, but many need time and practice to get it right...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and travel](#)

[Breastmilk protects your baby from illness and infection, so it is the safest drink for your baby while travelling...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and work](#)

[You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and your diet](#)

[Breastfeeding women need to eat regularly and include a wide variety of healthy foods in their diet...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - dealing with mastitis](#)

[Mastitis affects some breastfeeding women and may be caused by blocked milk ducts or a bacterial infection...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - dealing with nipple problems](#)

[Your nipples may be sensitive in the first few days after birth, but nipple pain is not a normal part of breastfeeding...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - deciding when to stop](#)

[It is up to you and your baby to decide when breastfeeding should stop...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - expressing breastmilk](#)

[Expressing breast milk by hand is a cheap and convenient method...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - the first days](#)

[Let your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days to help establish good breastfeeding patterns...](#)

- [Breastfeeding - when to start](#)

[Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth allows your baby to behave instinctively and breastfeed with little intervention...](#)

- [Food for babies - tucker talk tips](#)

[Before six months, breastmilk or formula is the only food and drink that your baby needs...](#)

- [Lactose intolerance](#)

[Symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, gas, abdominal pain and diarrhoea...](#)

Growth and development

- [Child development \(1\) - newborn to three months](#)

[Infants in the first eight weeks have no control over their movements and all their physical activity is involuntary or reflex...](#)

- [Child development \(2\) - three to six months](#)

[Young babies still have a notion that the whole of life is happening inside themselves, and they are 'making it all happen'...](#)

- [Child development \(3\) - six to nine months](#)

[Fun activities, such as shaking or banging objects, helps a baby understand they have an effect on the world...](#)

- [Child development \(4\) - nine to 12 months](#)

[At nine months your baby is moving around by crawling or pulling along with their arms. Safety is very important now. Your baby is also 'talking' with recognisable sounds and may even say simple words...](#)

- [Child development \(5\) - one to two years](#)

[Between the age of one and two, your toddler understands they are a completely separate person from you...](#)

- [Child development \(6\) - two to three years](#)

[Parents can be tricked into thinking our toddlers are more grown up than they really are...](#)

- [Children's feet and shoes](#)

[A child learning to walk receives important sensory information from the soles of their feet, and shoes can make walking more difficult...](#)

- [Growth charts for children](#)

[Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...](#)

- [Teeth development in children](#)

[Teething symptoms are common in children and can be managed without medications...](#)

- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)

[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)

- [Toilet training](#)

[When toilet training your toddler, praise every little success and remain calm about accidents...](#)

Behaviour and learning

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)

[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [10 tips to raise an optimistic child](#)

[Be a positive role model ... 10 tips to raise an optimistic child...](#)

- [Anxiety and fear in children](#)

[You can help your child overcome anxiety by taking their fears seriously and encouraging them to talk about their feelings...](#)

- [Children and shyness](#)

[If your child's shyness is especially debilitating, you may like to consider professional help from a counsellor or psychologist...](#)

- [Children and sibling rivalry](#)

[Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...](#)

- [Discipline and children](#)

[Disciplining your child means teaching them responsible behaviour and self-control...](#)

- [Dummies](#)

[Dummy sucking should stop before school age to avoid teeth or mouth problems...](#)

- [Left-handedness](#)

[If your child is naturally left-handed, don't try to force them to use their right hand...](#)

- [Tantrums](#)

[When a young child is having a tantrum, it is because the emotional \(limbic system\) part of the brain is dominating the child's behaviour...](#)

- [Thumb and finger sucking](#)

[Finger or thumb sucking should stop before school age to avoid mouth problems...](#)

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[If you restrict yourself to a narrow range of foods, your child will notice and copy your wariness...](#)

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[Some toddlers do most of their eating on the run, refusing to sit down at the table at all...](#)

Healthy eating

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[Be guided by your baby and let them set the pace when weaning and introducing solid foods...](#)

- [Breakfast](#)

[Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2...](#)

- [Childcare and healthy eating](#)

[Childcare centres should provide healthy meals for your children...](#)

- [Children's diet - fruit and vegetables](#)

[If you eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, your child may eventually follow your lead...](#)

- [Eating tips for babies](#)

[First foods for babies can be prepared easily and cheaply at home without salt, seasonings and sweeteners...](#)

- [Eating tips for children \(3\) - older toddlers](#)

[Offer children the same foods as the family, with a variety of textures and flavours for balanced nutrition...](#)

- [Eating tips for young toddlers](#)

[Children have a natural ability to sense when they are hungry and when they are full...](#)

- [Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks - children](#)

[Encourage children to drink and enjoy water. Sweet drinks such as juice, cordial and soft drinks may cause health problems for children if consumed in large amounts...](#)

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- [Dental checks for young children](#)

[Children should have an oral health check by the time they turn two...](#)

- [Immunisations - vaccinations in Victoria, Australia \(video\)](#)

[Vaccinations are encouraged for all individuals living in the state of Victoria, Australia. The immunisation program in Victoria may be different than other countries, and individuals who have moved...](#)

- [Melissa's story \(video\)](#)

[Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old...](#)

- [No Jab No Play](#)

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- [Travelling with children](#)

[If your child is old enough, involve them in planning a trip so they can get excited about it...](#)

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- [Asthma in childhood - triggers \(video\)](#)

[Parents and children talk about some of the factors that can cause a child's asthma to flare up...](#)

- [Back pain in children](#)

[Children with back pain may grow into adults with chronic bad backs, so it is important to encourage sensible back care...](#)

- [Bedwetting](#)

[Bedwetting is a problem for many children and punishing them for it will only add to their distress...](#)

- [Bronchiolitis](#)

[Bronchiolitis is a common chest infection in babies under six months of age...](#)

- [Colic](#)

[Caring for a crying baby with colic can be stressful, so take some time out to calm down...](#)

- [Constipation and children](#)

[A healthy diet, plenty of fluids, exercise and regular toilet habits can help relieve constipation in children...](#)

- [Cradle cap](#)

[Cradle cap is not contagious and it is not caused by poor hygiene or bad parenting...](#)

- [Croup](#)

[Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...](#)

- [Fever - children](#)

[Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis in children](#)

[Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea \(runny or watery poo\) and...](#)

- [Nappy rash](#)

[Most babies get nappy rash at some stage, no matter how well they are cared for...](#)

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- [Roseola infantum](#)

[Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children...](#)

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[Sleeping habits are learned, so try to set up a bedtime routine for your baby as soon as you can...](#)

- [Sleep - children and naps](#)

[A child needs a daytime nap until they are around two and a half to three years of age...](#)

- [Sleep - children and nightmares](#)

[Your child may have only a few scary dreams a year, or be troubled by nightmares much more often...](#)

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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)

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[Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems...](#)

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

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[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)

- [Playgrounds and child safety](#)

[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)

- [Poisoning and child safety](#)

[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)

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

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Grief and trauma

- [Child Protection Service](#)

[Child Protection provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children from harm caused by abuse within the family...](#)

- [Death of a baby](#)

[Miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death is a shattering event for those expecting a baby, and for their families. Grief, relationship stresses and anxiety about subsequent pregnancies are common in...](#)

- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)

[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

- [Trauma and children - newborns to two years](#)

[Babies and toddlers can be as affected by trauma as any other family member...](#)

- [Trauma and children – tips for parents](#)

[Tell your child the facts about a distressing or frightening experience using language they can understand...](#)

- [Trauma and children - two to five years](#)

[Preschoolers may not have the words but will show their distress at traumatic events through changes in behaviour and functioning...](#)

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

- [Home Safety, Child and Youth Health, South Australian Government](#)
- [Kids Health Info Bookshop](#)
- [Safety Centre Home Safety Checklist, The Royal Children's Hospital](#)

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