Newborn Safety

Accidents in the home are the major cause of injuries to young children. It is important to make sure your home is safe. “Babypoofing” should begin now and continue throughout your child’s life. Get a baby’s view of your home by crawling through each room and looking for potential hazards. Remember that babies roll, creep, reach and explore. No one can protect a baby from all hazards, but by taking these actions, you will get a good start in providing a safe environment.

Protecting baby from infections
- Many illnesses are passed by hand contact. It is very important for everyone handling the baby to wash their hands well. It is also important after diaper changes and cord care.
- Avoid contact with individuals who are ill with, or have been exposed to, communicable diseases such as colds, flu and diarrhea.
- Avoid large public crowds, such as shopping malls or church, until the baby has his/her second checkup at 6 to 8 weeks.
- Limit the number of people who kiss your baby on the face.

Preventing suffocation and choking
- You will be given a bulb syringe at the hospital. It is used to remove fluid from baby’s mouth or nose in case of spit-ups or runny noses. Squeeze it first, and then placed gently into the mouth toward baby’s cheek or into tip of nostril. Release the bulb gently, sucking fluid into syringe. Empty by squeezing out fluid onto a washcloth. Clean by squeezing and releasing in soapy warm water. Keep the bulb syringe near your baby’s bed.
- Bars/slatts on the crib should be no more than 2½ inches apart so your baby’s head cannot get caught in between.
- To prevent suffocation and reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), your baby should always sleep on his or her back. Never put your baby on a water bed, bean bag or anything that is soft enough to cover the face and block the air to the nose and mouth.
- Your baby should always sleep in his/her crib/bassinet alone; babies should never sleep with other family members, even during nap-time.
- Crib mattress should fit snugly so baby’s head cannot get caught. Tuck the bottom sheet smoothly under the mattress.
- You should avoid the use of bumper pads.
- Keep pillows or large floppy stuffed toys out of the crib or playpen.
- Keep plastic bags out of reach; never use as waterproof sheets or toys. Knot them and throw them away immediately.
- Never leave baby unattended with a bottle propped in his/her mouth.
- Do not have anything around baby’s neck.
- Attend a CPR class and learn what to do for a baby or child who is choking or needs resuscitation.
- Keep emergency phone numbers close to the phone, like 911, your health care providers and the Poison Center (800-222-1222).
- Make sure no strings or cords are near the baby, such as drawstrings on clothing or cords on mini-blinds.
- Keep Kleenex or tissue and other small objects out of baby’s reach.
- Not sure if something is too small and might be a choking hazard? Use a toilet paper roll; if the item fits inside the roll, then it is too small for your baby.
Preventing burns
• Avoid sun exposure.
• Do not use sunblock on infants under 6 months.
• Do not smoke, drink, eat or carry any hot substance when close to or holding your baby.
• Keep infants away from radiators, fireplaces, heaters, hot food, beverages and cigarettes.
• Buy only fire-resistant sleepwear and clothing.
• Never heat bottles or baby food in the microwave.
• Have smoke detectors on each level of the house in proper working order. Change batteries every 6 months and the entire unit every 10 years.
• Buy fire extinguishers and keep them in the kitchen, basement and garage. Check gauge to make sure it is still in working order.
• Develop a plan to escape your home if there’s a fire.
• Think about installing a carbon monoxide (CO) monitor.
• Have radon levels checked.

Preventing falls
• Keep crib rails up all the way. Railing should be at least 26 inches higher than the lowest level of the mattress support.
• Lower the crib mattress before your baby can sit up alone.
• Never leave baby alone on a table, bed, couch or any surface from which baby can fall.
• Maintain a firm grasp of the baby while carrying or caring for him or her. Always remember to support the head during the first few months.
• Keep stairs free of clutter to prevent falls while carrying the baby. Also, avoid use of throw rugs and waxing of floors.
• Clean up slippery spills right away.

Preventing injury from toys
• Buy age-appropriate toys for your child.
• Toys for older children may have small pieces that baby could place in his or her mouth and choke on.
• Examine toys and stuffed animals regularly. If a toy has broken parts, do not let your child play with it.
• Remove strings, ribbons and buttons on stuffed animals and dolls.

• Check rattles, squeeze toys and teething for small ends that could extend into back of baby’s mouth.
• Throw out any toy you think is too small for safety.
• Take toys out of the crib or playpen when baby sleeps.
• Follow age recommendations on toy packages, which are based on safety/development issues.
• For a list of toy recalls, contact CPSC (Consumer Product Safety Commission) at 800-638-2772.
• Keep balloons away from baby.

Keeping baby safe from strangers
• Don’t leave signs in front of your home announcing the baby’s birth.
• Don’t publish your address or announce it in the newspaper or on the radio.
• Be careful what information you give out over the phone.
• Don’t leave your baby alone in public places.

Protecting baby from secondhand smoke
Children who breathe secondhand smoke are more prone to getting colds, ear infections, pneumonia, bronchitis and other lung diseases, including asthma. Smoking also increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). If a mother smokes and breastfeeds her baby, the breast milk will also have nicotine in it.

Here are some ways to protect your new baby from secondhand smoke:
• If you smoke, ask your care provider for information on a program to help you stop smoking.
• Do not smoke in your home and ask other people not to smoke there.
• Do not let anyone smoke in the car or other enclosed areas when your baby is present.
• Insist on no-smoking areas when you visit restaurants or other public places with your baby.
• Make sure your baby’s day care or private sitter has a smoke-free environment.
• Let family and friends know that your baby’s health is your No. 1 priority. Smoking anywhere around the baby’s breathing space is off limits!
Protecting baby from lead poisoning

To limit baby’s exposure to lead:

- Find out whether the paint in your home contains lead. Homes built before 1978 are more likely to have lead paint.
- Be aware that plastic mini-blinds can give off lead dust if foreign-made. U.S.-made mini blinds are safest.
- When preparing formula, run the cold water for 2 to 3 minutes first. Do not use warm water for preparing food or formula.
- For more detailed information, call your local health department.
- It is helpful to have your water’s lead level tested for safety, especially if you have a well.

Call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- Your child has ingested anything other than food
- Your child has experienced a burn
- You feel your child is choking
- Or any other concerns, call your health care provider