

# HOME SAFETY



## Postpartum Parent Support Program

# Information

Canada

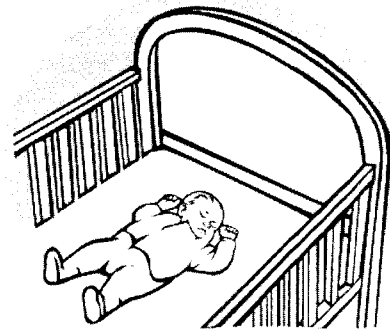
## **Create a safe home environment for your baby**

Your new baby's safety depends on you and the rest of the family. Since babies are unable to recognize dangers themselves, they must be protected from situations and objects that may harm them. The physical development of babies increases their access to the world around them. This information helps you understand the possible dangers during your baby's continual development.

Parents always have to be aware of possible dangerous situations and make a safe environment. As your baby grows and develops, his or her needs will change. To help you see possible dangers in your home, crawl on your hands and knees and judge for yourself what could be dangerous for your baby at the various development stages.

Remember – injuries can be prevented!

***The safest sleeping position for your baby is on his or her back to help reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).***



- Always put your baby on his or her back to sleep, on a firm, flat surface.
- Always make sure no one smokes around your baby.
- Always avoid putting too many clothes and covers on your baby, as your baby can get over-heated.
- Avoid soft mattresses, fluffy pillows, comforters and stuffed toys in your baby's crib or playpen. These could prevent proper air circulation around your baby's face.
- Breastfeed your baby as it may give some protection against SIDS and provides many other life-long health benefits.
- Bumper pads are not necessary nor recommended.

Note: Your baby can develop a flat head (positional plagiocephaly) from always turning his or her head to the same side. A little bit of flattening goes away on its own. More serious flattening may be permanent, but it will not affect a baby's brain or development. A simple way to prevent your baby from getting a flat head is to change the position of the baby's head each day. Babies like to look at something interesting so turn their head to look out into their room rather than toward the wall. Here's how you can change the position of your baby's head while still giving your baby the same view:

- One day, place your baby with his or her head at the head of the crib.
- The next day, place your baby with her head at the foot of the crib.
- Each day, alternate your baby's orientation in the crib.
- Babies should also have supervised "tummy time" when they are awake, several times a day. This will help to prevent a flat head. It is also important for your baby's development.
- If your baby still develops a flat head, talk to your doctor.

***Your baby should never be left alone:***

- On a table or counter.
- In a baby seat or a car seat.
- On a couch, bed, water bed or bunk bed.
- In a bathtub.
- With a pet.
- With a propped bottle as your baby could easily choke. He or she should always be held for feeds.
- With other young children.

Note: No baby should be left in the care of any child under the age of 12.

***Your baby will soon learn to roll from side to side, therefore:***

- Always place your baby in a crib when you are not caring for them.
- Baby equipment must meet current safety standards.
- Cribs and furniture should be placed away from windows to prevent them from becoming entangled in the window cords. Cribs and furniture can pose falling dangers when your baby learns to climb.
- Blinds and curtains with long cords are a strangulation danger to babies. Cords need to be cut as short as possible and must be tied out of the baby's reach.
- Always use the safety belt when a baby or child is in a stroller, baby seat, car seat, high-chair or other baby equipment that have protective straps.

***Your baby will learn to move his/her hand to his/her mouth and try to eat anything within reach, therefore:***

- Small objects are a choking hazard to your baby. Always keep small objects such as pins, needles, diaper pins (open or closed), buttons, coins, marbles, and jewellery out of your baby's reach.
- Toys should be age appropriate. They should be large and soft. All parts should be larger than baby's mouth.
- Keep diapering supplies out of baby's reach.
- Strings and ribbons are strangulation hazards. Never use them on soothers or pacifiers.
- Any plastic such as bags, wrapping, etc. are a suffocation hazard and should be kept out of your baby's reach.
- Always keep sharp objects such as scissors, knives and forks beyond your baby's reach.
- Never drink hot beverages while your baby is in your arms or on your lap as you could accidentally scald or burn your baby.

***Your baby will soon learn to sit up, creep and pull himself/herself to a standing position, therefore:***

- Safety or baby gates should always be securely installed at the bottom and top of stairs as soon as your baby begins to crawl. Safety gates should meet current standards.
- Prevent your baby from falling out the window by keeping it closed or by using a window guard.
- Remove any objects that your child might climb, such as step stools, ladders or large toys.
- Babywalkers have resulted in serious injuries and pose an unacceptable risk to children. Toddlers have been seriously injured, either from falling down stairs in a babywalker or by pulling down items such as a heated pot, electrical cords or poisonous plants that are normally out of reach. The injuries are just as serious even with the new style of walkers with anti-skid strips.
- Heavy decorative objects such as vases and figurines and anything that can be toppled or pulled off counters or tabletops, are better stored away until your baby or child is older.
- Always keep objects on dressers and change tables out of baby's reach.



- Never leave cords dangling. A baby or child can easily grab dangling cords from curling irons or other small appliances. Electric kettle cords should be kept well away from the front of the counter or table.
- All electrical outlets should always be covered with safety devices, and all extension cords disconnected.
- Never leave the iron on the ironing board unattended.
- To prevent burns, always use cold-air vaporizers in the house.
- When using the stove, use the back burners first and always turn the pot handles toward the centre. Your baby should never be allowed near a hot oven.
- Always keep containers of hot liquid out of your baby's reach.

- Medicines, vitamins, hair sprays, cosmetics and household chemicals must be in a safe place, out of reach and sight. Always store these items in their original containers.
- Child-resistant closures on medicine, vitamins or other chemicals are not child proof. Keep them out of reach of babies and children.
- Consult with your local gardening centre, poison control centre or public health department to determine if any of your houseplants are poisonous. Dispose of those that are poisonous



- Some foods are choking hazards to your child. Avoid foods such as nuts, raw carrots, orange segments, hot dogs, bacon or hard candies that could be swallowed whole.
- Always keep alcoholic drinks out of reach. Even small amounts of alcohol can poison a baby or young child.
- Pet food can be a choking hazard and should be kept out of reach.



- Keep your baby or child away from potentially dangerous equipment such as lawn mowers, exercise equipment, washers, dryers, woodworking tools and machinery. Make these areas off limits, i.e. behind locked doors.

***Your baby should never be shaken.***

- A baby's head is large compared to the body and the neck is weak.
- A baby's brain is fragile and quick movements can cause internal bleeding in the skull (head injury).
- Shaking is very dangerous. It can lead to lifelong disability or death.

Make sure that your babysitters, childcare workers and any friend or relative who cares for your child is aware of the dangers of shaking a baby. Inconsolable crying is usually the reason why someone shakes a baby. It's important that everyone who looks after your baby learn how to cope with the baby's crying. Please see the information sheet on "Never Shake a Baby".

## **Water is hazardous**

- Water heaters should be set at 49° Celsius.
- When preparing a bath for your baby, turn the hot water off first and check the temperature of the water BEFORE putting your baby in the water.
- Stay with your baby, toddler or child at all times when he is in the bath.
- Never leave any baby, toddler or young child in a wading pool alone or near backyard pools, open ditches or ponds, not even to answer the phone. Bring your baby with you.

## **The effects of environmental tobacco smoke**

- Children are very vulnerable to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). ETS is made up of two kinds of smoke: second-hand smoke and side stream smoke.

Second-hand smoke is the smoke you breathe when you and your baby are around smokers (smoke exhaled by smokers).

Side stream smoke is the smoke that comes from the burning end of the lit cigarette. Side stream smoke is higher in chemicals because it is not filtered.

- Together these two smokes contain many dangerous chemicals. The chemicals found in smoke have serious effects on the health of babies and children. Keep all matches and lighters out of sight and out of reach of your children.
- Babies and young children exposed to smoking (from parents, family members, friends, and care givers) are more likely to have respirator illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma and infections in the ears and lungs. Babies exposed to ETS have a higher risk of SIDS.

## **Create a smoke-free environment for your baby before and after birth.**

- No one should smoke near your baby.
- Smoke outside if you and/or your partner are still smoking. Ask your family and guests to do so also.
- Inspect and select a child care facility where smoking is not permitted.

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