

Risk of Injury and Stages of Development

Children are at risk for injuries because developmental factors limit their physical, mental and emotional abilities. They grow quickly and want to test and master their environment. Their curiosity, fearlessness and lack of safety knowledge put them at risk of attempting actions for which they may lack the skills and physical capabilities. The type of injuries children may incur is related to their development. For example, an infant's neck is too weak to support the weight of his head, so he will be at risk of serious injury and even death if shaken. Infants and toddlers explore their surroundings by putting objects in their mouths, and therefore are at risk of choking. Toddlers like to walk fast, climb and reach for objects, and therefore are at risk of falling or poisoning. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of injury in all age groups.

| Age | Characteristics | Risk of Injury | Prevention Tips |
|-------------------|---|---|---|
| Birth to 3 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eats, sleeps, cries Has strong sucking reflex Begins grasping and rolling over unexpectedly Needs support of head and neck | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falls from couches, tables, changing tables and bed Burns from hot liquids Choking and suffocation SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never leave infants alone on beds, changing tables, sofas, chairs or any other high surface. Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F. Install smoke alarms and check the batteries twice a year. Keep small objects and toys away from the baby. Healthy infants should be placed on their back for sleeping. Do not use soft bedding in a baby's sleeping area. Approved child safety seats must be properly installed in the back seat facing the back of the car, and used. |

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| 4 to 6 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sits with minimum support Plays with open hands Reaches for objects Begins to put things in mouth Is increasingly curious about surroundings Wants to test, touch and shake objects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle occupant injury Falls Burns from hot liquids Choking and suffocation SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) Shaken Baby Syndrome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved child safety seats must be properly installed in the back seat facing the back of the car, and used. Never leave infants alone on beds, changing tables, sofas, chairs or any other high surface. Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F. Keep small objects and toys away from the baby. Healthy infants should be placed on their back for sleeping. Do not use soft bedding in a baby's sleeping area. Never shake a baby, even playfully. |

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| 7 to 12 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sits alone Very curious about everything Crawls Starts to walk Explores surroundings Pulls things Likes to go outside Imitates movements of adults and others Begins eating solid food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicle occupant injury Falls Burns from hot liquids Choking and suffocation SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) Drowning Shaken Baby Syndrome | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved child safety seats must be properly installed and used. Do not use walkers and other walker-type equipment. Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F. Keep hot foods and liquids out of the reach of children. Put guards around radiators, hot pipes and other hot surfaces. Healthy infants should be placed on their back for sleeping. Always carefully supervise; never leave a child alone in or near any water (including tubs, toilets, buckets, swimming pool or any other containers of water) even for a few seconds. Never shake a baby, even playfully. |

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| 1 and 2 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes to go fast • Is unsteady • Tries to reach objects • Runs • Walks up and down stairs • Likes to climb • Pushes and pulls objects • Can open doors, drawers, gates and windows • Throws balls and others objects • Begins talking, but cannot express needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor vehicle injuries • Falls • Burns • Poisoning • Choking • Drowning • Child abuse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put toddler gates on stairways and keep any doors to cellars and porches locked. • Show child how to climb up and down stairs. • Remove sharp-edged furniture from frequently used areas. • Turn handles to back of stove while cooking. • Teach child the meaning of "hot." • Keep electric cords out of child's reach. • Use shock stops or furniture to cover used and unused outlets. • Store household products such as cleaners, chemicals, medicines and cosmetics in high places and locked cabinets. • Avoid giving child peanuts, pop- corn, raw vegetables and any other food that could cause choking. • Toys should not have small parts. • Always carefully supervise; never leave a child alone in or near any body of water even for a few seconds. • Check floors and reachable areas carefully for small objects such as pins, buttons, coins, etc. |

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| 3 and 4 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins making choices • Has lots of energy • Seeks approval and attention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic injuries • Burns • Play area • Poisons • Tools and equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check and maintain playground equipment and environment. • Child should play on age and weight-appropriate equipment. • The surface under and around play equipment should be soft and shock absorbent. Use specifically approved surface materials. • Check that child is dressed appropriately to avoid strangulation (e.g., no drawstrings on shirt, jackets, etc.). • Store household products, medicines and cosmetics out of child's sight and reach. • Teach child about the difference between food and nonfood, and what is not good to eat. • Watch child carefully during arts- and-crafts projects for mouthing of paints, brushes, paste and other materials. • Use nontoxic supplies. • Store garden equipment, scissors and sharp knives out of reach. • Teach child the safe use of tools and other equipment, and supervise carefully when using. |

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| 5 years and up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is stronger Likes to explore the neighborhood Will ask for information Will seek out playmates Becomes involved in sports Plans and carries out ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic injuries Burns Play area Guns | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach pedestrian and traffic safety rules. Older children must wear safety belts. Be a positive role model: cross streets correctly and wear a safety belt at all times when traveling in a car. Always use helmets even on bicycles with training wheels or tricycles. Teach children how to drop and roll if their clothing catches fire. Practice fire drills so child becomes familiar with the escape route and the sound of the smoke alarm. Keep matches and lighters away from children. Stress bringing found matches to adults. Check and maintain playground equipment and environment. Child should play on developmental and weight- appropriate equipment. The surface under and around play equipment should be soft and shock absorbent. Use specifically approved surface materials. Teach safe play rules and encourage child to put toys away after playing. Do not keep guns or any other weapons in the child care setting. |