



Keeping your baby safe

Safety advice for you and your baby

Injury is the leading cause of death and disability among Queensland children.

Queensland also has higher mortality rates for childhood injury than any other place in Australia. Unfortunately, the home is the most common place for children's injuries to occur.

As you care for your baby and watch them grow, keep alert to all the ways children can unintentionally hurt themselves. The most common injuries are falls, drowning (and immersions), burns and scalds and poisonings.

It is important to realise that accidents are not inevitable and in fact, most accidents can be predicted and prevented.

The aim is not to wrap children up in cotton wool – after all, exploring, taking risks and trying new things are all crucial parts of children's development. However, it is important to try to reduce the number and the severity of injuries in Queensland kids.

To download a comprehensive child home safety checklist, visit www.health.qld.gov.au/chip/documents/32461.pdf. Reuse this checklist each year as your child grows, develops and explores.

Caring for your baby

- Never leave your baby alone on change tables, high chairs, beds, tables, chairs or other high furniture.
- Hold your baby when feeding them a bottle, rather than propping them up. Babies can vomit or inhale milk.
- Do not heat your baby's bottle in a microwave oven. The milk can heat unevenly, risking scalding your baby's mouth.
- Never handle hot food or drinks, such as tea, coffee or noodles while holding your baby. Burns from hot water and drinks can cause severe scarring to children.
- Keep your baby out of direct sunlight. Use sun protection tools, including sunscreen, clothing and a hat. Sun protection information is available from the Cancer Council Queensland on 13 11 20.

Toys

- Toys must be safe, durable and washable. If a toy is furry, remember babies can suck on the fur and swallow it.
- Toys should not have:
 - dangling ribbons, long strings or elastic
 - small or loose parts that can be pulled or chewed off
 - squeakers that can be removed
 - sharp edges or points
 - rattles that can be taken apart.
- Make sure teething rings can't be pierced.
- All cuddly toys should be stuffed with old stockings, dacron or polyester. (Crumbled foam, beans and beads can all be swallowed or pushed into ears or noses.)

Clothes and dummies

- If your baby has a dummy, check it:
 - is in good condition
 - has no ribbons or chains
 - has holes in the plastic holder for quick, easy removal in an emergency
 - is used to settle your baby and not to put baby to sleep.
- Remove any loose ribbons or trimmings on clothing because they can choke your baby.
- Look inside mittens and booties to make sure there are no loops or threads that can wind around your baby's fingers and toes because they can cut off circulation.

Bath time

- Always check the temperature of the water with your wrist or elbow before putting your baby in the bath.
- Never leave your baby alone during bath time – not even for a minute.
- Babies should never be left in the care of older children, no matter how reliable they seem.
- Check that your home has a properly functioning hot water tempering device installed and set at the right temperature (50°C).

Around your home

Your baby is very mobile and eager to explore. Check your house thoroughly and often to keep your baby safe.

- Always ensure your baby is strapped in securely when in a bouncer, stroller or high chair.
- Always stay with your child while they are on the change table.
- Wherever your child is playing, always check there are no objects within reach that are small enough for your baby to swallow. As a guide, anything smaller than a matchbox is small enough for your baby to swallow. Pins, batteries, dead insects, buttons, beads, nuts, coins and other small objects may cause your baby to choke. You may need to look at the room from the actual eye level of your child.
- Install smoke detectors throughout your home, check them and change the batteries regularly. This will protect not only your baby but also the whole family. Contact your local fire service for more information.
- Carefully supervise any interactions between your baby and animals, especially dogs – particularly when dogs are feeding, sleeping or with new puppies. Make sure your baby is never left unsupervised near any family pets.
- As your child starts using their mouth to taste everything around them, be aware of the dangers of poisoning. Install a lockable cupboard, preferably up high, in the kitchen, bathroom, laundry and garage to store poisonous materials. Do not pour or decant chemicals into another container (especially food or drink bottles).
- Avoid smoking near your baby. Keep cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays and cigarette butts out of the reach of children. Cigarettes and butts are poisonous to children.
- Check your home has a proper electrical safety switch installed and operating to prevent electrocution.
- Every outside play area should be fenced from the street, pool/spas and driveway. On rural properties, a special fenced play area away from any dams or waterways should be set aside as the children's play area.

Out and about

- Every time your baby travels in a car, they must be in an approved baby capsule or child restraint. More information on these items can be found at some ambulance stations or by calling the Queensland Government helpline on 1300 369 003.
- Always know where your baby is before reversing your car.
- Always make sure your baby is strapped in securely when they're in a shopping trolley or stroller to prevent falls. Always stay with them.
- Never leave your baby alone in the car – not even for a minute.
- As your child explores the back yard and garden, be aware of the many hazards, including poisonous or irritating plants, mushrooms, any unfenced water and sharp objects.





Safe sleeping

A safe sleeping place reduces the risk of sudden infant death and fatal sleeping accidents.

To provide a safe sleeping environment for an infant:

- always place baby on the back to sleep, never tummy or side
- put baby's feet at the bottom of the cot
- the cot must meet the Australian standard for cots
- use a firm, clean mattress that fits snugly in the cot
- no additional mattresses or extra padding should be placed in a travel or porta cot
- tuck in bedclothes securely so bedding is not loose
- keep quilts, doonas, duvets, pillows, cot bumpers, sheepskins and soft toys out of the cot or sleeping place.

Always look for the Australian Standard for Cots (AS 2172) when buying a portable cot.

For a full guide to safe nursery furniture, go to www.consumer.gov.au and look for the publication, *Keeping Baby Safe*.

Re-using old nursery furniture can create very real danger for your baby – so please check all hand-me-downs from well meaning friends and relatives against current standards. Never use nursery furniture bought from a second hand dealer.

More information

If you would like more information about your child's development or you are concerned about your child, talk to your child health nurse or your doctor.

You could also ask at your local library for books on child development.

For safe sleeping information, see the *Safe sleeping* fact sheet or contact SIDS and Kids by calling 1300 308 307 or visit their website at www.sidsandkids.org.

Acknowledgement

This fact sheet is the result of input and effort from many health professionals Queensland. Their help with the content is greatly appreciated.

To access the full set of fact sheets, go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/child&youth/factsheets>.