

Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP)



GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Prevention of Accidents and Injuries

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10 FAQs ON PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS AND INJURIES

1. How can we make our homes safer and prevent physical injuries in children?
2. What is a safe way to put a baby to sleep?
3. My friend's 18-month-old daughter jumped out of her arms and fell. Now I am feeling scared to lift my baby. How should we safely hold our baby?
4. My 1-year old was just about to put a tablet in her mouth when I spotted her. How can we avoid such accidental ingestions and poisoning?
5. How should we choose safe toys for children?
6. My neighbor's son put his hand in a bucket of hot water in the bathroom. He got bad scalds. How can we prevent burns in children?
7. My son loves to keep putting electric switches on and off. I am scared of accidental electric shock. What can we do about it?
8. Please guide us for traveling safely in a car with our toddler.
9. We were shocked to learn of our colleague's 8-year son who drowned in a swimming pool. What can be done to avoid such kind of incidents both at home and outside?
10. What should we do immediately after a child meets with some accident on a holiday or at odd hours?

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Prevention of Accidents and Injuries



Q1. How can we make our homes safer and prevent physical injuries in children?

Some areas and objects in the house are more prone to cause injuries to a child. Be aware of such possibilities to avoid accidents.

- *Staircase*: When your child starts crawling, install safety guards across entries to stairs and balconies.
- *Balconies and parapet walls/grills*: The parapet wall should be tall enough and wide enough to prevent the fall of a child trying to look down over it. Ensure that there are no objects near the parapet wall that a child can climb to then climb on to the parapet wall or the balcony grill. The grill design should not make it easy to climb (not have climbable horizontal members).
- *Windows*: When your child starts climbing, lock windows—particularly upper-story windows—restrict window openings or shield them with grills or nets having a widest opening of 4 inches.
- *Furniture*: It should be sturdy and stable—a child should not be able to pull it down or knock it. Any sharp projecting ends or corners should be rounded or padded or covered with corner protectors. Children may run into drawers left pulled out and can get injured. Install drawer guards, if available.
- Flat screen televisions should be fixed to a clamp, or to the wall.
- *Glass*: Install safety glass in windows and doors or apply shatter-resistant film to windows and doors.
- *Tools and weapons*: Lock away tools like saws and drills. Keep lawn mowers, chain saws and other sharp tools and guns or knives strictly out of reach of all children and adolescents.
- *Baby cots*: Cots or beds for small children should not have horizontal bars or footholds that your baby can use to climb out. Space between bars should be 5–9.5 cm (gaps wider than 9.5 cm could trap your child’s head or let your child fall out of the cot) and at least 60 cm tall. The lock must not be openable by the child. Check that the mattress is firm.
- *Light*: Leave a hall light on at night or use sensor lights.
- *Floor*: Whenever possible, avoid multiple levels or steps on the same floor. A non-slippery floor texture is desirable.
- *Bathroom and the kitchen*: These are the most accident-prone areas in the house. Whenever, not in use, please lock them. Train the child from a very early age to keep away from the kitchen platform.
- *Locks*: All locks should be above the level of 4 feet so that a child does not accidentally lock someone in the bathroom/any room nor open it by himself before he becomes self-reliant.

Q2 What is a safe way to put a baby to sleep?

- Place your baby on his or her back for all sleep times whether day or night. Babies who sleep on their backs are much less likely to die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) than babies who sleep on their sides or stomachs.
- Use a firm, flat sleep surface, such as a mattress covered only by a properly fitted sheet. Soft surfaces can increase the risk of sleep-related death. A firm sleep surface helps reduce the risk of SIDS and suffocation.
- Keep your baby's sleep area (for example, a crib or bassinet) in the same room where you sleep until your baby is at least 1-year old. Placing the crib close to your bed so that the baby is within view and reach can also help make it easier to feed, comfort, and monitor your baby.
- Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, and soft toys out of your baby's sleep area. Additionally, do not cover your baby's head or allow your baby to get too hot. Keeping blankets and pillows increase the risk of suffocation.
- When some older children are made to sleep on the bed, it will be wise to keep some cushioned mattress on the floor by the side of the bed.
- Do not keep a phone charging near the cot/bed of the child.
- Keep the main door of the room open and the bathroom attached to the room bolted when going outside for some work for a while.

Q3 My friend's 18-month-old daughter jumped out of her arms and fell. Now I am feeling scared to lift my baby. How should we safely hold our baby?

- Make sure your hands are clean and dry before you lift a baby.
- When holding a newborn, it is very important to always have a hand to support the head and neck until 3 months of age (when they normally develop head control).

You can hold the **newborn** in following positions:

- **Cradle hold:** Cradling a baby is a natural and simple method. Place the baby's head in the crook of one of your arms with the hand supporting the bottom, and wrap your other arm around the baby to hold your first arm (**Fig. 1**).



Fig. 1: Cradle hold.

- **Shoulder hold:** Lean your baby up on against your shoulder. Support the bottom using the same side forearm. Secure the grip with your other hand behind the baby's neck and head (**Fig. 2**).

- **Belly grip:** Place the baby prone. Slide your hand under his chest to support it while encircling its shoulder with your thumb and



Fig. 2: Shoulder hold.

gripping the arm. Lift the baby to keep the head a little higher than the legs and the body snugged to your trunk. Babies (especially when colicky) like this position for short duration of time (**Fig. 3**).

As the **infant** grows, sometimes they become very restless when being carried.

- **Waist hold:** One safe way is to straddle their legs one in front and one behind the waist with the bottom supported by your side of waist and the



Fig. 3: Belly grip.

trunk held with your arm wrapped around the baby firmly. Ensure a tight grip on this because babies can be unpredictable and may suddenly swoon in one direction to slip out of your grip (**Fig. 4**).

Baby carrying boards, slings, and monkey bags are available in the market to secure your baby better and at the same time allowing you to use your one or both hands. Use the one that is age appropriate for your baby.



Fig. 4: Waist hold.

Q4. My 1-year old was just about to put a tablet in her mouth when I spotted her. How can we avoid such accidental ingestions and poisoning?

A toddler is a very curious creature and we need to keep the home environment safe for him/her (**Fig. 5**).

- Keep medicines/small items (nuts, popcorn, button batteries)/cleaning agent/acids/mosquito repellents/pesticides out of reach of children.
- Do not refer to medicines as chocolate/candy.
- Discard medicines that are not required/or have expired.
- Child-resistant packaging has been proved effective for medications, fuels, household chemicals, and pesticides.
- Do not store kerosene/acids/corrosives/liquid paraffin in discarded soft drink bottles.
- Keep medicines and toxic products, such as cleaning solutions and detergents, in their original packaging.
- Be aware and watchful of the toddler's activities.

Fig. 5: Safe home environment for toddler.

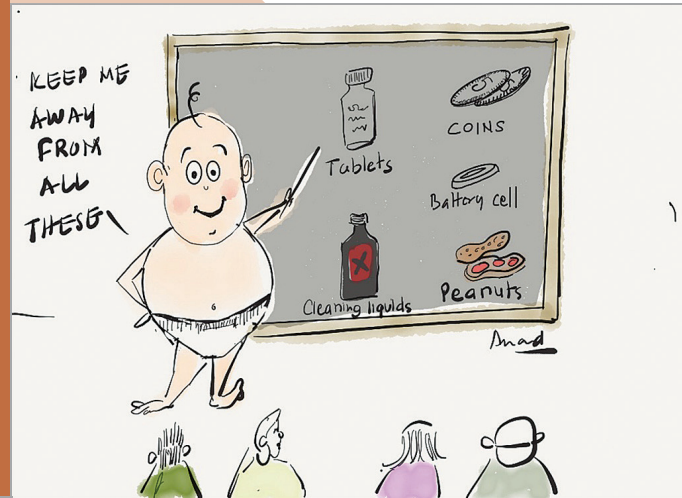


Fig. 6: Age-appropriate toys for child.

Q5. How should we choose safe toys for children?

- Always choose age-appropriate toys (**Fig. 6**).
- Ensure that toys do not have small detachable parts which are choking hazards or sharp ends which can hurt the child.
- Avoid marbles, balls, and coins—which can cause choking.
- Stuffed toys should be washable.
- Crayons/paints used should be nontoxic.
- Toys made of fabric should be flame resistant.
- Paint on any toys should be lead-free.
- Art materials should say “nontoxic”.
- Toys should be large enough—3 cm in diameter and 6 cm in length—so that they cannot be swallowed or lodged in the windpipe.
- Battery-operated toys should have battery cases that secure with screws so that kids cannot pry them open.
- Toys should be unbreakable and strong enough to withstand chewing.
- Toys must not have strings longer than 7 inches (18 cm) and parts that could pinch small fingers.
- Baby walkers can cause severe injuries and are not recommended.

Q6. My neighbor's son put his hand in a bucket of hot water in the bathroom. He got bad scalds. How can we prevent burns in children?

- Cooking surfaces/gas stoves should be on a stand and not on the ground (**Fig. 7**).
- Keep children away from kitchen when cooking/boiling water or milk/frying.
- The handle of the kitchen utensils should be kept inward.
- Hot food items/tea/water should be carried cautiously, especially around blind corners of the house to prevent accidental collision.
- Remember that food/liquids heated by a microwave have increased core temperature. Always test the temperature of any hot food/liquid before giving it to the child especially those heated in a microwave.
- While bathing—water should be tested for the correct temperature before the child is brought to bath area. The cold water knob of the geyser should never be closed and the hot water knob should never be left open. Never leave a child unattended or in care of an older child in the bathroom.
- Matches/ *Kapoor*/incense sticks/ *diyas* /crackers should be kept out of reach of children.
- Designate a place for ironing clothes and keep children away from hot iron.

Fig. 7: Keep your child away from kitchen to prevent burn.

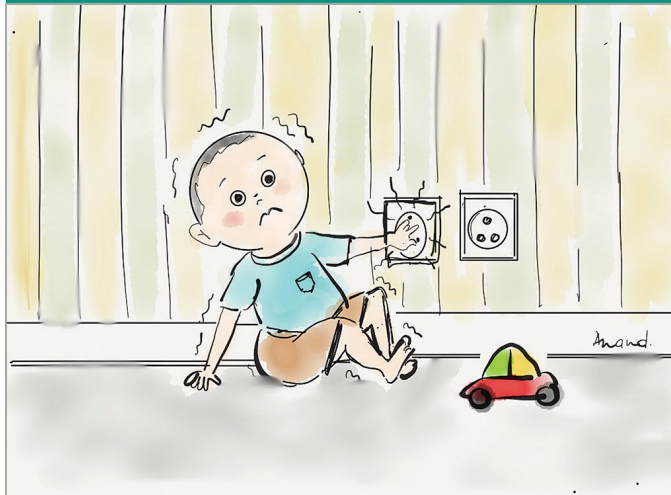


Fig. 8: Keep toddler away from electrical sockets.

Q7. My son loves to keep putting electric switches on and off. I am scared of accidental electric shock. What can we do about it?

- Children should be kept away from open wires/power lines/transformer boxes.
- Unplug electrical devices when not in use and keep them away from water.
- Caution older children against the use of electrical appliances when their hands are wet.
- The electrical sockets should be placed out of reach of toddlers (**Fig. 8**). If within reach, these sockets should be baby-proofed to ensure safety (Baby safe-socket covers are available easily online).

Q8

Please guide us for traveling safely in a car with our toddler.

To make car travel safe for a toddler:

- Toddlers should always be seated in the rear seat of a car and always keep the child lock on—while traveling.
- Cars must be fitted with a baby car seat of appropriate size.
- Toddlers become restless easily—so engage them and stock their favorite toys for the journey.
- Safe driving is good for all the travelers.

Q9

We were shocked to learn of our colleague's 8-year son who drowned in a swimming pool. What can be done to avoid such kind of incidents both at home and outside?

We often hear incidents of drowning in ponds, swimming pools, rivers, and oceans and of course village wells but drowning can occur even in anyone's home. A few suggestions for preventing such horrific mishaps are as under:

- Bathrooms should always be bolted with bolts on the upper end.
- Avoid having bathtubs in homes with little children.
- Never keep water stored in buckets because small kids can often fall into it. If at all one has to store the buckets should be covered and door bolted from outside.
- Never leave your child alone in the bathroom.
- Teach your child to swim as soon as possible—usually after 3–5 years of age. All adults must learn the basics of swimming (floating, moving through the water) and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- If you have a pool at home, ensure that it is fenced on all sides, with self-closing and self-latching gates.
- Kids should wear life jackets in and around lakes, rivers or the ocean. They must be closely supervised by an adult when in or near water (including bathtubs).

Q10

What should we do immediately after a child meets with some accident on a holiday or at odd hours?

All parents and teachers must learn basic CPR and basic first aid. It would be helpful to mentally run through an imagined emergency scenario. Be prepared and decided as to whom will you contact and where would you rush in case of an emergency situation. Be aware of hospitals that run round the clock emergency services and cater to children near your residence.

*Stay informed to avoid accidents
Be prepared to face accidents*