Accident Prevention
Birth to 12 Months

As babies learn and explore their world; accidents will happen. To prevent a severe accident, it is vital to make your home safe for your child. There are six main accidents babies face as they grow up: car crashes, falls, choking, suffocation, poisoning, burns, and drowning. This handout discusses how your child may be prone to each of these hazards and how you can help prevent a severe accident.

Choking and Suffocation: What You Should Know
Choking is a common accident among infants. Babies, especially newborns, have natural grasping and sucking reflexes. Older infants begin to reach for objects and try to put them in their mouths.

Prevention
Keep small objects out of baby's reach (no small objects on table tops or lower shelves, etc.). Risky objects include pins, bottle caps, nails, and tacks.

Be sure toys are large, smooth, and painted with non-toxic paint. Toys should not have small parts that can be snapped off and swallowed. Also, be careful that older children's toys stay out of your baby's reach. Take toys out of the crib before your baby falls asleep. Remove the bumpers from around the crib.

 Babies should sleep on their back. This may reduce the chances of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

Keep drapes, cords, and plastic material away from infants to avoid strangulation or suffocation.

Falls: What You Should Know
Falls from changing tables, cribs, high chairs, and infant seats are common. Babies squirm, roll, creep, and pull to a standing position. After about 6 months, they will try to walk while holding on to something and then alone. Soon they will try to climb up and crawl under furniture.

Prevention
Never leave an infant alone. Babies, even newborns, can squirm enough to get to the edge of a table, couch, or bed and fall off. They can even wiggle out of a high chair.

Your baby should always be buckled when sitting in a car, bouncy seat, swing, or high chair.

Be sure to raise the sides of your infant's crib.

Keep a hand on your baby if you need to turn away when changing or bathing your baby.

Provide a closed, safe area for your baby to wander in.

Put safety gates across the top and bottom of stairs.

Clean spills up right away to prevent a fall. Be careful while walking on slippery floors or walks. Accidents can happen while carrying a baby.
Throw away any walkers on wheels. There are many cases of children falling down stairs in these.

**Car Accidents: What You Should Know**
Infants are too small to be protected by seat belts. Also, an adult cannot protect a baby that they are holding on to if there is an accident.

**Prevention**
Always use a car seat, even for “quick trips.” Be sure the seat is strapped to the car and the infant strapped in the seat. The back seat of the car is safer for your child. Infant and child car seats should not be in the front seat if there is an airbag on the passenger side. Infants, birth to 12 months, should be in rear-facing car seats.

**Burns: What You Should Know**
Burns in young children are often caused by spilled hot liquids, ovens, heaters, and fires. Keep in mind that by 6 months, infants are old enough to turn on faucets. They can move very quickly.

**Prevention**
Turn down the water heater to 120°-130° so that scalding water does not come out. Turn cold water on first, then hot. Be sure to test water first before you put your baby in it.

Turn pot handles toward the center of the stove. Use back burners when you can.

Always keep infants a safe distance from stoves, hot food, coffee cups, hot plates, and from your cooking. Never handle hot items or liquids while holding the baby.

Keep ashtrays, lighted cigarettes, cigars, pipes, matches, and lighters out of baby’s reach.

Put screens or doors in front of fireplaces. Be sure coals from a fire are cool before you leave them unattended.

Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide monitors (at least one on each floor.)

Be prepared to escape from a fire in your house. Be sure to plan two escape routes out of your home. In case of fire, get everyone out of the house first, then call 911.

Cover electric outlets with safety caps.

Anchor cords so that an infant cannot pull them up and put them in his mouth. Make sure no wires are exposed.

**Poisoning: What You Should Know**
Infants will try to put all sorts of things in their mouths.

**Prevention**
Put household poisons in a locked cupboard. It's also vital to move harmful products high out of the infant’s sight and reach. Plan ahead before your baby starts to climb.

Keep the phone number of your doctor, Poison Center, ambulance, and emergency room near the phone.

If your baby does take a poison, call your local poison center or emergency room right away for advice.

Always store harmful products in their original bottles. If you must change bottles, be sure to label the new one. Never use food containers to store harmful products.
Household substances that can cause poisoning

**Medicines**
- aspirin/Tylenol®
- cough syrups
- iron pills
- vitamins
- tranquilizers
- birth control pills
- allergy pills

**Shop Products**
- acetone
- kerosene
- lighter fluids
- fuel oils
- gasoline
- turpentine
- paint
- paint removers & thinners

**Personal Products**
- cosmetics
- perfumes
- nail polish & remover
- hair sprays, deodorants

**Lawn Products**
- pesticides
- weed killers
- fertilizers

**Household Products**
- bleaches
- detergents
- floor & furniture polish or wax
- rubbing alcohol
- moth balls

**Others**
- tobacco
- alcohol
- toilet water

Poisonous and caustic (will burn mouth, esophagus, and stomach)
- ammonia
- detergent
- disinfectants
- oven cleaner
- lye
- drain cleaner
- dishwasher soap
- toilet bowl cleaner

Drowning: What You Should Know

Babies can fall over, even if they can sit well. As babies get older (6-12 months), they don’t sit still. These are good points to keep in mind when bathing your infant or playing with your infant in a wading pool.

**Prevention**

Never leave an infant alone in a bathtub or near any water. Ignore phones and doorbells. Hold your infant securely with one hand and wash with the other. Non-skid mats are helpful.

Never leave a bathtub full of water unattended.

Keep toilet bowls closed.

Empty buckets when done using them.

**Other Cautions**

Keep objects out of reach that can cut your child: knives, glass, cans, sharp objects (toys or furniture with sharp edges, and broken toys).

Poison Control’s Toll Free Number
1-800-222-1222

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2017. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#4817