

Play it safe



*Safety information for parents
and carers of children - 1 to 5 years*

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Introduction

Through the first 5 years it is important that your child is able to explore and learn in safety. As a parent or carer your role in keeping your child safe will change over time. The information in this booklet is designed to help you keep your child safe as he/she explores and learns.



Safety as your child grows

Each child will grow and learn at her/his own pace. Often your child will surprise you with her/his ability. Knowing what to expect will help you keep your child safe.

By fourteen months your child may be able to:

- Walk without help.
- Crawl upstairs.
- Turn knobs, switches and dials.

By two years your child may be able to:

- Turn taps and unscrew tops.
- Be interested in the smell, taste and texture of objects.
- Start copying the actions of grown-ups.
- Be able to repeat simple instructions, but not understand the reason behind the instruction.

Between three and five years your child's:

- Physical abilities and skills will improve, for example learning to hop.
- Range and understanding of language will expand.
- Understanding of actions and what happens as a result of her/his actions will grow. Although your child still may not understand the reason for safety rules.
- Play will include exploring, experimenting and make-believe.

You know your child best, so use the age ranges here as a guide only.



Teaching your child about safety

From birth, babies and young children have a huge ability to learn. You can use these years to teach your child good safety habits. Learning good safety habits now will help your child as he/she gets older.

Toddlers (1 to 2 years old)

Toddlers do not learn from experience, and will not always understand the reason for safety rules. You can tell your child about safety rules, but do not expect him/her to remember them. You are responsible for your child's safety.

Learning about safety can be fun, you can:

- Set a good example and talk about what you are doing.
- Play simple safety games, for example show and tell with pictures of hot and cold things.
- Praise good safety behaviour, and gently correct unsafe behaviour.

Young children (2 to 5 years of age)

As your child reaches 3 years of age, it is time to start explaining why things are dangerous rather than simply saying "don't touch". This will make them feel grown up and encourage them to follow your safety rules. At this age you can teach them some basic safety rules, however, remember you are responsible for keeping them safe.

To help your child enjoy learning about safety:

- Set a good example and talk about what you are doing.
- Explain why some things or actions are dangerous.
 - Play safety games, for example "I spy with my little eye something that is hot".
- Teach your child that his/her actions can affect others, for example leaving toys on the stairs may cause you to trip and fall.
- Praise good safety behaviour and gently correct unsafe behaviour.



Tips to help your child explore and learn in safety

In general, the safety tips are for all children under 5 years of age. If a safety tip is for children of a specific age only, the age will be written beside the safety tip.

The following information and safety tips will help you help your child explore and learn in safety.

Falls

Your child will trip and fall as he/she plays, getting grazed knees and elbows. Your child is learning what he/she can do, and this is an important part of growing up.

Here are some safety tips to help prevent injuries:

- Fit locks to all windows that your child can reach by climbing.
- Avoid putting furniture like beds or chairs under windows.
- Choose toys and play equipment that are suitable for your child's age.
- 1-3 years: Fit safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Begin to teach your child how to climb stairs. Never let your child go up or down on his/her own.
- 3-5 years: Teach your child to hold onto the banisters when using the stairs. Safety gates should still be used where there are younger children in the home.



Burns and scalds

Your child will want to be involved and help you around the home. Children under 5 are safest doing jobs that do not involve hot objects or liquids.

Here are some safety tips to help prevent injuries:

- Always check the water temperature before putting your child in the bath.
- Keep irons and flexes out of your child's reach. Avoid ironing with a toddler around.
- Fit a short or curled kettle flex, to prevent the flex from dangling over the work surface.
- Use the back rings of the cooker and turn pot handles to the rear.
- Fit a cooker guard around the edge of the cooker.
- Use socket covers or furniture to hide electrical sockets.



Fires in the home

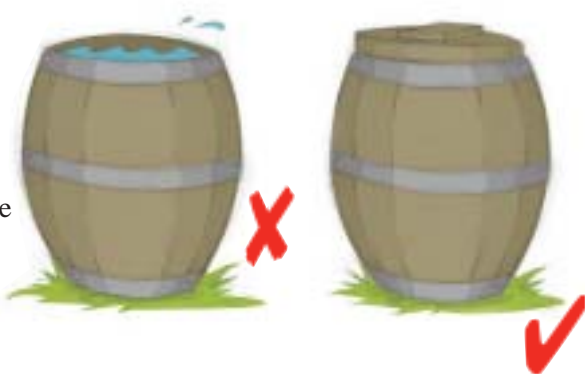
There are some general fire safety rules that everyone should follow:

- Fit a smoke alarm and check that it is working once every month.
- Always use a fireguard with open or electric fires and heaters, solid fuel, oil and gas stoves.
- Put out cigarettes and matches completely.
- Keep matches, lighters and cigarettes out of the reach of children.
- Do not overload electric sockets. Replace old worn flexes.
- Close interior doors to stop fires spreading.
- Work out your family escape plan and practise it now.



Drowning

Encourage your child to enjoy water play and 'swimming' in pools, always under the care of you or another adult. Even shallow water can be dangerous. A child can drown in as little as 2 inches (5cm) of water.



Here are some safety tips to help prevent injuries:

- Closely watch your child when he/she is playing with or near water.
- Fill in or fence off garden pools or water collectors.
- Empty baths, paddling pools and buckets immediately after use.
- Stay with your child when he/she is in the bath.

4 years+:

- Your child may be okay to be left alone in the bath as long as he/she cannot lock the door and you are within earshot.



Cuts and bruises

Minor bumps and bruises as a result of play are common.

Here are some safety tips to help prevent injuries:

- Store knives and scissors safely.
- In windows and doors where there is glass at your child's level replace it with safety glass, board it up or cover it with safety film.
- Watch for little fingers near doorjambs. Think about fitting foam doorstops.

3-5 years:

- Teach your child to close doors carefully.
- Teach your child the correct way to use and put away knives and scissors.

Suffocation and choking

You can start using pillows and duvets once your child is over 1 year old. She/he is now strong enough to kick or push the bedding away if it covers her/his face.

Do not allow your child to play with or keep things in plastic bags, even when being watched by an adult. She/he will think that it is okay to play with any bag she/he picks up.

Here are some safety tips to prevent injuries:

- Encourage your child to sit or stand still while eating, so that she/he does not choke on pieces of food.
- Always watch your child when she/he is eating.
- Do not give peanuts to children younger than 6 years of age.
- Keep small objects, such as marbles or coins out of reach.
- Keep all plastic bags out of your child's reach and sight.

Poisoning

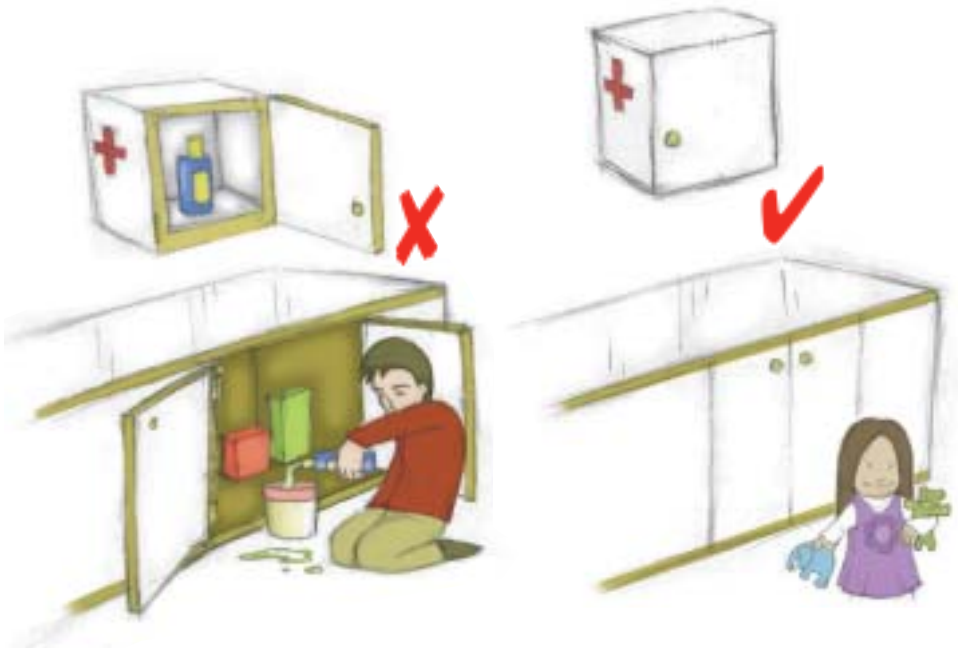
Your child will try to eat or drink different things, even if it tastes or smells unpleasant. Child resistant lids and catches are not child proof, and at some stage your child will be able to open them.

Here are some safety tips to help prevent injuries:

- Keep all medicines and chemicals locked away and out of the reach of your child.
- Keep all chemicals in the containers you bought them in to avoid confusion.
- Check the garden for poisonous plants.

3-5 years:

- Teach your child not to eat anything he/she finds outdoors without checking with you first.



Strangulation

Your child will use everyday objects in imaginative ways during play.

Here are some safety tips to prevent injuries:

- Check that your child's clothing and necklines are not too tight.
- Watch your child when he/she is playing climbing games.
- Do not leave rope or cord lying around.

3-5 years:

- Teach your child not to put anything around his/her neck when playing.

In the car

The safest place for your child to travel in a car is strapped into a suitable child car seat in the backseat of the car.

- Always use a correctly fitting child car seat, that is suitable for your child's height and weight.
- Encourage your child not to fiddle with the fastening for her/his car seat.
- Do not leave your child in the car without an adult.

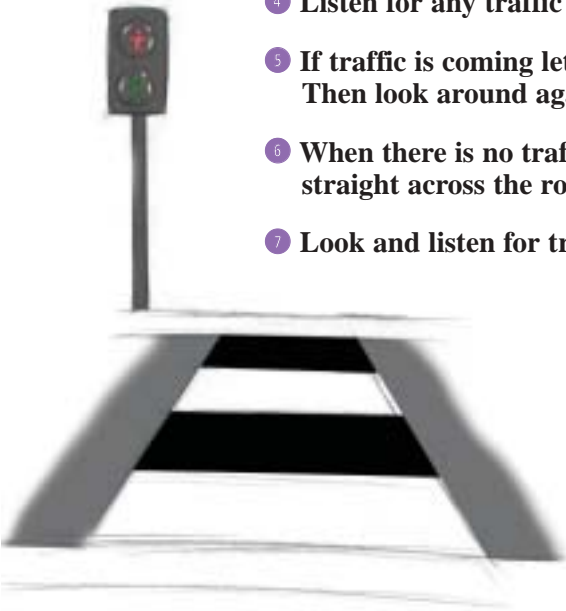


Out walking

Never allow a child younger than 5 years of age out alone. Children younger than 7 years of age should not cross the road alone.

- Encourage your child to hold your hand when out. Walk with your child on the inside with yourself on the kerbside.
- Set a good example when crossing the road, by following the Safe Cross Code:

- 1 **Look for a safe place to cross**
- 2 **Don't hurry! Always stop and wait.**
- 3 **Look all around before you cross the road.**
- 4 **Listen for any traffic**
- 5 **If traffic is coming let it pass. Then look around again**
- 6 **When there is no traffic, walk straight across the road**
- 7 **Look and listen for traffic while you cross**



When playing outdoors

Children younger than 12 years of age should not cycle their bicycles in traffic.

In the garden:

- Fill in or fence off garden pools. Check your boundaries are secure if there is a pond next door.
- Watch your child in paddling pools or near water.
- Empty paddling pools, watering cans and buckets immediately after use.
- Check the garden for poisonous plants. Teach your child not to eat anything he/she picks up outside before checking with you.
- Cover sandpits when not in use to stop fouling by cats and dogs.
- Use a correctly fitting helmet when your child is playing on trikes, bikes or scooters.

In the playground

- Choose a playground with play equipment suitable for your child's age.

In the sun

- Use sunblock, a hat and loose clothing on warmer days.



First Aid

Have a First Aid Kit in your home

Your kit should contain

- Scissors
- Bandages
- Band Aids
- Absorbent pad
- Tape
- Antiseptic wipes



**Do you know First Aid?
Learn now!**

For details of classes in your area contact:

Order of Malta 01 6684891

St. Johns Ambulance 01 6688077

Irish Red Cross 01 6765135

Basic First Aid

Stay calm and act quickly

Cuts

1. Clean it

Use cold running water.

2. Cover it

Cover small cuts and grazes with a plaster.

For heavy bleeding put pressure on the cut using an absorbent pad or clean folded cloth until it stops bleeding. If there is something inside the cut, like glass, put pressure on the skin beside the cut.

3. Raise it

Hold up a bleeding arm or leg, as long as you do not think it is broken.

**If the cut is very deep or
has something in it, take your
child to the Family Doctor.**

Burns and scalds

1. Cool it

Immediately run cold water over the burn for at least 10 minutes.

2. Clean it

Use cold running water. Remove tight clothing as burnt skin can swell.

3. Cover it

Cover the burn with a clean non-fluffy cloth.

Take your child to the hospital.

Choking and suffocation

1. Remove any obvious obstruction from your child's mouth or face.

2. Can your child breathe?

If yes take your child to the hospital at once.

3. If unable to breathe dial 999 or 112.

4. Stay on the line and listen carefully to the advice.

Poisons

1. Find the poison

Find out what your child has taken. If pills are missing, quickly check if they have fallen on the floor or under furniture.

2. Call your Family Doctor or hospital for advice

3 Give them small sips of water or milk

do not try to make your child sick.

4. Take your child to your Family Doctor or hospital

for further treatment. If possible take the container and a sample of whatever you think has been swallowed.

Falls and Head Injuries

If your child has been knocked unconscious from a fall:

1. Dial 999 or 112 immediately, ask for an ambulance.

Let the ambulance service know if your child is now conscious or unconscious – they will advise you on what to do while you are waiting.

2. Do not move your child

Don't move your child unless you have to, they may have broken bones or internal injuries.

If your child is conscious after a fall:

If your child is conscious and complains of severe pain, is vomiting and drowsy, or you think a bone maybe broken, dial 999 or 112 for an ambulance.





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Child Accident Prevention Trust (2000) **Accidents and child development**

National Safety Council (2000) **Be Safe**

Health Promotion Unit (1997) **Play it Safe**

www.healthpromotion.ie