



# Safety Tips for Dads To Keep Babies Safe

(Infants Under 1 Year)

Accidents happen to everyone, but there are things we can do to make them happen less often and be less dangerous. To keep babies and infants safe, the first step is to know how they are most likely to get hurt. Drawing on data from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control,<sup>1</sup> this guide gives information about the kinds of accidents that are the most common for **children before age 1**, and then offers suggestions about what dads can do to help avoid these accidents.

Because babies' injuries from accidents are less common but may be more dangerous than older children's injuries, most of the safety tips presented here focus on the injuries that are often fatal for babies.



<sup>1</sup>National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2015). WISQARS online reports. Available at: <http://cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/>

### **Most accidental deaths happen when a baby cannot breathe (suffocation).**

Because they cannot move themselves very well, babies can easily be covered by or stuck under ordinary things around them. If something is blocking their nose and mouth, they can suffocate very quickly because they may not be strong enough to get it out of the way. The most dangerous time for babies is when they are sleeping; if they become trapped or tangled in something in their bed, there may not be anyone around (or awake) to notice.

**Car crashes and drowning (often in the bath) are other common ways that infants die accidentally.** Car crashes are especially dangerous if the infant is not in a car seat,

is in the wrong kind of car seat, or if the seat is not connected to the car correctly. The second most common cause of infant death is a category called “other,” which includes things like fires and falls.

Although not on the figure (because they are not considered accidents), deaths caused by handling a baby too roughly are a bit more common than fatal car crashes.

Less serious injuries that do not cause death are also important to prevent. When infants end up in the emergency room for non-fatal injuries, it is usually because they fell, or they ran into a person or thing, such as a table leg. There are things parents can do to make their homes safer, but the best way to prevent these injuries is to make sure that there is always someone watching the child.

## **TIPS FOR AVOIDING SERIOUS INJURIES TO BABIES AND INFANTS**

1. **Babies should sleep alone in their own bed or crib.** Other children or adults sharing a bed with babies can roll over onto the baby in the middle of the night. Experts recommend that newborn babies sleep separately but in the same room as an adult (next to the bed). Try hard to avoid falling asleep when you are holding the baby on a couch, bed, or chair.
2. **Make sure the baby’s bed is safe.** Cribs should have sides high enough to prevent the baby from falling out and a firm mattress that reaches all the way to the edge of the frame. Do not put any toys or pillows in the crib, especially when a baby is sleeping or alone. Even though stores sell crib bumpers, these

are unnecessary and can be dangerous. Couches, large pillows, and waterbeds make dangerous beds for babies. For very young babies, there should be no blankets at all; to safely keep young babies warm, you can use “sleep sacks” that look like baby sleeping bags and are available where you buy infant clothes, including used clothing stores and online.

3. **Never leave an infant alone in the bath, even for just a moment.** Watch and handle them carefully, and do not let yourself get distracted by the TV, the phone, or other electronics while they are in the water. Try to get other children settled first so you can focus on the baby’s bath.

4. **When riding in cars (including taxis), infants should be in car seats that point them toward the back of the car (rear-facing).**

In many places, there are local organizations that provide free or low-cost child seats and can help you install them correctly.

5. **Use safety devices in places where children could fall or run into objects.**

Places such as stairs, windows, balconies, and table corners should be safely secured. Padding (which you can buy or make from squares of carpet or blankets), and devices such as window guards and stair gates, can keep crawling infants safe.

6. **Make your home safe from fires.**

Heaters and stoves should not have things like cloth or paper near them, and you should only use them when someone is in the room and awake. Never smoke in bed, and check smoke alarms often to make sure that they have fresh batteries and they work. Property owners are required by law to put smoke alarms in their rental properties in most states. You can also call your local fire station or American Red Cross to find out where to get free smoke alarms for your home.

7. **Take precaution against accidental poisoning.**

Carbon monoxide and lead poisoning can be deadly, but they are preventable. Carbon monoxide is odorless and colorless. Without a detector, people often do not know when they are at risk of being poisoned. Carbon monoxide poisoning happens most often in enclosed spaces, such as houses, and when appliances like stoves, ovens, or other gas-operated devices leak. Detectors

are often available through local fire departments and are cheap and easy to install without professional help. Make sure to change the batteries every 6 months. Lead poisoning occurs when you breathe or swallow something with lead in it, and is most common in older houses that have old paint or pipes. Other sources of lead poisoning can include toys or candy, especially if they are made in other countries where regulations are less strict than in the U.S. Removing leaded products from the home can be costly, but some areas provide free lead testing and removal services for families that qualify.

8. **Have a plan for when the baby will not stop crying.**

New parents often get frustrated when babies do not stop crying, but lots of crying can be normal (talk to your baby's doctor to be sure). You can learn ways to soothe a crying baby, but sometimes nothing works. If you feel yourself getting angry or frustrated, put the baby down in a safe place, like the crib, and give yourself a few minutes to relax. Caregivers who are angry sometimes hurt babies, not realizing that even just 5 seconds of shaking a baby can cause death. It can help if you take some deep breaths and slowly repeat a word to yourself, like "relax." You can also call a friend or relative to help you calm down.

9. **Never leave babies in a car without an adult.**

Even in weather that seems cool, cars can get dangerously hot in just a few minutes. Babies can become dehydrated and overheat in a matter of minutes, so they should never be left alone in a car, no matter the season.

## More Information

### Car seat use:

<http://www.childtrends.org/?indicators=seat-belt-use>

### Carbon monoxide FAQs:

<http://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm>

### Carbon monoxide safety:

[http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m4340092\\_FireCOFactSheet.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4340092_FireCOFactSheet.pdf)

### Danger of leaving infants in the car:

<http://www.webmd.com/parenting/features/hot-cars-and-child-death-prevention>

### Dealing with anger:

<http://www.apa.org/topics/anger/control.aspx>

### Finding car seat inspection stations:

<http://www.safercar.gov/cpsApp/cps/index.htm>

### Free or low-cost car seats:

<http://buckleupforlife.org/about-our-program>

### Home fire safety:

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/home-fire>

### Installing car seats:

<http://www.safercar.gov/parents/CarSeats/How-To-Install-Car-Seats.htm#>

### Installing car seats (videos):

<https://www.youtube.com/user/thecarseatlady1>

### Lead safety:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/infographic.htm>

### Making your home safe:

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/home/household\\_checklist.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/home/household_checklist.html)

### More on infant risks and dangers:

<http://www.worryclock.com>

### More on suffocation:

<https://www.childdeathreview.org/reporting/sidssuid>

### Preventing drowning:

<http://ndpa.org/resources/safety-tips/layers-of-protection>

### Preventing falls:

<http://www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/Falls>

### Safe bedding FAQs:

<http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety/2012/09/safe-sleep-bedding-pillows-safety-and-more>

### Safe bedding guide:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/12/peds.2011-2284.full.pdf>

