



child accident
prevention trust

how safe is your child from a serious fall?

a safety guide for parents and
carers of young children



Falls are the most common childhood accident, as children test their abilities and explore their environment. While most are not serious, some falls can cause injuries with long-term consequences for children and their families.

The most serious injuries and deaths happen when children fall from a substantial height, such as from a window, balcony or down stairs. Remember, babies and toddlers can also suffer serious injury falling from any raised surface or even out of a highchair.

Here are some easy to remember safety tips to help protect your young child from a serious fall.



Windows

- ✎ fit windows with locks or safety catches to stop toddlers and young children falling out. The gap should be no wider than 6.5cm (2.5") for babies and toddlers under 18 months old and no wider than 10cm (4") for older toddlers and young children
- ✎ if you fit window locks make sure an adult knows where the keys are kept in case of fire
- ✎ move low furniture, such as beds and chairs, to prevent children using them to reach the windows.





Balconies

- ✎ if your home has a balcony you need to take special care. There should be a barrier at least 110cm (43") high around the edge of the balcony. Also check the width between railings – if the gaps are more than 6.5cm (2.5"), board them up, especially while your baby is under about 18 months. If the gaps are greater than 10cm (4"), they need to be boarded up for much longer
- ✎ keep young children away from balconies, unless accompanied by an adult – this can be simply done by keeping doors locked when they are not in use.

Stairs and banisters

- ✎ when your baby starts to crawl, fit safety gates to stop them climbing stairs or falling down them
- ✎ accidents can happen when young children climb over or through banisters. If gaps are more than 6.5cm (2.5") cover with boards or safety netting while your baby is under about 18 months. If gaps are greater than 10cm (4"), they need to be boarded up for much longer. Board up any gaps in horizontal rails because they can be easy to climb
- ✎ keep stairs free from clutter to avoid trips or falls
- ✎ discourage children from playing on the stairs, or running up and down them.

In the home – general safety tips

-  bunk beds are not recommended for children under six. Discourage children from playing on the top bunk
-  use safety glass in low glass doors and windows or cover the panes with safety film. This can stop children being seriously cut if they run or fall into the glass. (Contact a Glass and Glazing Federation glazier for further information). A simple alternative is to board them up.

Babies

Remember that although babies have limited mobility, they can still wriggle, kick or roll into hazardous situations

-  don't leave your baby alone on a bed, sofa or changing table – even for a second – as they could roll off
-  change your baby's nappy on the floor
-  don't put your baby's bouncing cradle or car seat on a raised surface, their wriggling could tip it over the edge. Only use it on the floor
-  strap your baby into their high chair or pushchair every time
-  remove large toys from your baby's cot once they can sit up or get on all fours, as they could use them to climb out of the cot
-  keep one hand free to hold the hand rail while carrying your baby up or down stairs in case you trip
-  never allow young children to carry your baby up or down stairs
-  if you use a baby walker, only use one that complies with BS EN 1273:2005. Baby walkers with older BS standards are less safe. Never leave your baby alone in their baby walker.

In the garden/yard

- 👉 trampolines should be placed on soft, energy-absorbing ground and should only be used by one child at a time. Adults should not go on with small children as their weight is uneven and could propel the child off the trampoline. Always look for a trampoline that comes with safety netting. Alternatively think about buying a safety cage to reduce the risk of falls
- 👉 encourage children not to climb on roofs or other high areas such as sheds or fences
- 👉 when children play in trees, make sure the branches are pruned to prevent them climbing higher than you could easily rescue them
- 👉 position climbable play equipment over something soft like a mat, soft earth or well watered grass. Never put it over paving, tarmac or concrete.



Out and about

- ✎ avoid using play equipment that is old or damaged or equipment that does not have an impact-absorbing surface under it
- ✎ ensure your child has a correctly-fitting cycle helmet, and they get in the habit of wearing it whenever they are riding their bike – both on and off the road.

In an emergency

If your child has been knocked unconscious from a fall:

- ✎ dial 999 immediately to request 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
- ✎ if your child becomes conscious, tell him or her to keep as still as possible.

We strongly advise parents and carers to learn first aid.

capt is a charity committed to reducing childhood injury.



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