



Safety for Your Child: 2 to 4 Years Old

Between 2 and 4 years old, children are growing and developing so quickly that parents and caregivers may not be aware of what their little ones can do. Before you know it your child will be jumping, running, riding a tricycle, and using tools.

At this age, your child doesn't understand dangers or remember "no" while playing and exploring. They are at special risk for injuries from falls, drowning, poisons, burns, and car crashes. In fact, injuries are the leading cause of death of children younger than 4 years old in the United States.



Here are 5 common injuries in children this age, and ways you can help prevent them.

Falls

Because your child's abilities are so great now, they will find an endless variety of dangerous situations at home and in the neighborhood.

Your child can fall off play equipment, out of windows (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Home-Safety-Heres-How.aspx>), down stairs, off a bike or tricycle, and off anything that can be climbed on. Be sure the surface under play equipment (</English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Safety-Tips-For-Home-Playground-Equipment.aspx>) is soft enough to absorb a fall. Use safety tested mats or loose-fill materials (shredded rubber, sand, woodchips or bark) maintained to a depth of at least 9 inches underneath play equipment. Install the protective surface at least 6 feet (more for swings and slides) in all directions from the equipment.

Lock the doors to any dangerous areas (</English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Pool-Dangers-Drowning-Prevention-When-Not-Swimming-Time.aspx>). Use gates on stairways and install operable window guards above the first floor. Fence in the play yard. If your child has a serious fall or does not act normally after a fall, call your doctor.

Firearm hazards

Children in homes where guns (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Handguns-in-the-Home.aspx>) are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, their friends, or family members than of being injured by an intruder.

It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you choose to keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place, with ammunition locked separately. Handguns are especially dangerous. Ask if the homes where your child visits or is cared for have guns and how they are stored.

Burns

The kitchen can be a dangerous place for your child, especially when you are cooking. If your child is underfoot, hot liquids, grease, and hot foods can spill on them and cause serious burns (</English/health-issues/injuries-emergencies/Pages/Treating-and-Preventing-Burns.aspx>). Find something safe for your child to do while you are cooking.

Remember that kitchen appliances and other hot surfaces such as irons, ovens, wall heaters and outdoor grills can hurt your child long after you have finished using them.

If your child does get burned, immediately put cold water on the burned area. Keep the burned area in cold water for a few minutes to cool it off. Then cover the burn loosely with a dry bandage or clean cloth. Call your doctor for all burns. [Back to Top](#)

To protect your child from tap water scalds (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Bathroom-Safety.aspx>), the hottest temperature at the faucet should be no more than 120°F. In many cases you can adjust your hot water heater.

Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, especially in furnace and sleeping areas. Test the alarms every month. It is best to use smoke alarms with long-life batteries, but if you do not, change the batteries at least once a year.

Poisonings

Your child will be able to *open* any drawer and *climb* anywhere curiosity leads. Your child may *swallow anything* they find. Use only household products and medicines that are absolutely necessary, and keep them safely capped and out of sight and reach. Keep all products in their original containers. Use medications as directed and safely dispose of unused medicine as soon as you are done with it.

If your child does put something poisonous (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Childproofing-Your-Home.aspx>) in his or her mouth, call the Poison Help Line immediately. Attach the Poison Help Line number (1-800-222-1222) to your phone contacts list. Do not make your child vomit.

Car & traffic-related crashes

Car crashes are the greatest danger to your child's life and health. The crushing forces to your child's brain and body in a collision or sudden stop, even at low speeds, can cause injuries or death.

To prevent these injuries, it is important to correctly USE a car safety seat (</English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>) EVERY TIME your child is in the car.

It is safest for children to ride rear-facing as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer. Many convertible seats have limits that will permit children to ride rear-facing for 2 years or more. When they outgrow rear facing, children should ride forward-facing in a car safety seat with a harness. Many of these can be used up to 65 pounds or more, and this will help provide the most protection possible.

The safest place for all children to ride is in the back seat. In an emergency, if a child must ride in the front seat, move the vehicle seat back as far as it can go, away from the air bag.

Do not allow your child to play or ride a tricycle in the street. Driveways are also dangerous. Walk behind your car before you back out of your driveway to be sure your child is not behind your car. You may not see your child through the rear-view mirror.

Remember

The biggest threat to your child's life and health is an injury. If you have any questions about keeping your child safe and preventing injuries, talk with their pediatrician.

- Home Safety: Tips for Families With Young Children (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Home-Safety-Heres-How.aspx>)
- Playing Outside in the Yard: 8 Tips to Keep it Safe & Fun for Kids (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Backyard-Safety.aspx>)

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