



Preparing for Baby

Safety Tips for Newborns



University of Vermont Health

Golisano Children's Hospital





Congratulations! There is or will soon be a new baby in your life.

Life with an infant can be hectic and wonderful. Even before baby arrives, you are given so much information on how to keep them healthy and well fed. The purpose of this booklet is provide current best practice information to help you create a safe environment to reduce the risk of injuries for your entire family.

If you have questions, we are always available to you as a resource.

Sincerely,

The Safe Kids Vermont Coalition

UVMHealth.org/SafeKidsVT

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For parents, grandparents, and other caregivers
2025 Edition





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Getting Ready

Baby Registry

THE INSIDE SAFETY SCOOP

Every pregnancy is unique and different and so are the registries parents will create to fit their lifestyles. When it comes to choosing the products for your family, it can be tricky to distinguish which products are not recommended despite their advertising claiming safety. In fact, there are so many products on the market for infants, some of the simple items that can keep you and your newborn safe are easy to miss. Check out our lists for what to get and what to avoid as you start building your registry list.



CONSIDER FOR YOUR LIST

- **Wearable Blankets and Sleep Sacks.** These cute products can keep a sleeping baby warm through a Northeast winter without the risks that come from loose bedding like quilts, comforters or blankets.
- **Bath Thermometer.** These simple devices can give you peace of mind that the bath water isn't too hot or too cold, but just right for baby.
- **Baby Gates.** These are a multipurpose item! They can keep your exploring baby from falling down the stairs (make sure to use hardware mounted gates for tops of the stairs) and help separate spaces to manage where baby or pets are during the day.
- **Stroller Reflectors or Lights.** While not a commonly seen item, these will help you and your baby be more visible when taking those early morning or evening walks around your neighborhood.
- **Baby First Aid Kit.** Whether premade or DIY assembly, having easy access to the items needed to treat the inevitable minor injuries and illnesses is important.

CONSIDER SKIPPING THESE

- **Car Seat Accessories.** Aftermarket inserts or harness covers are not allowed by car seat manufacturers and can reduce the safety of the car seat. Vehicle seat protectors are also prohibited by many car seat manufacturers. Toys and mirrors can become projectiles aimed at your child's face during a crash.
- **Rocking sleepers.** They have been linked to infant deaths when children roll from their back to their stomach if unrestrained or strangulation if improperly buckled.
- **Bolsters and Wedge Positioners.** These products come in a variety of shapes, but they all pose a suffocation risk if a child rolls or moves and can trap babies if too close to the sides of their sleep area.
- **Baby Nests or Positioners.** The soft, plush materials are also a suffocation risk. They should not be used for unsupervised sleep, either in or outside of a crib.
- **Baby recliners and bean bags.** These are soft and pliable, creating a suffocation hazard. They can trap an infant when used in a crib.
- **Crib hammocks, weighted blankets, weighted sleepers and swaddles.** These items have not been tested. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns against using untested products for your baby.
- **Inclined sleepers.** In these products, the infant's head can fall forward cutting off their airway and increasing the risk of suffocation. Inclined sleepers are banned by the Safe Sleep for Babies Act.
- **Crib bumpers.** These products are also banned due to their risk of suffocation and other potential safety concerns.





While You're Pregnant

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS

Buckling up through all stages of your pregnancy is the single most effective action you can take to protect yourself and your unborn child in a crash.

HOW TO WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT

- Position the shoulder belt away from your neck and across your chest.
- Place the lap belt below your belly so that it fits snugly across your hips and pelvic bone.
- Wear a seat belt even if your vehicle has air bags.
- Do not turn off the air bags.

ADJUST YOUR SEAT

- Choose a comfortable, upright position, minimizing the gap between your shoulder and the seat belt.
- Move your seat back as far as possible from the steering wheel or dashboard, making sure you can comfortably reach the steering wheel and pedals when driving.

IF YOU ARE IN A CRASH

- Seek immediate medical attention even if you think you are not injured.

Picking Out a Car Seat

REAR-FACING CAR SEATS

For their safety and to comply with Vermont's (and many other states') law, babies must ride rear-facing. But with so many brands and features, it can be difficult to choose the best car seat for your needs. These are the types of rear-facing car seats:



Infant seats: This type of car seat is portable and usually fits newborns, and vehicles, well. Having an already harnessed kiddo is also great if you have older children who need to be secured in the vehicle. Most infants outgrow this style by their first birthday.

Convertibles and all-in-ones: These types of car seat change from rear-facing to forward-facing (all-in-ones also have a booster mode), growing with your child. These seats are not portable like an infant seat. Some may not fit newborns well, even if the child meets the weight and height minimums for the seat. These seats can also take up a lot of space front to back in a vehicle, because of the amount of recline needed for a newborn.



When you've narrowed down to a few options, take a moment to read over your vehicle owners manual. Not all vehicles and car seats are compatible for all of their features. For instance, vehicles with in-floor storage cannot support a car seat load leg (also called a stability or support leg). If you are excited for LATCH install, check to see what positions in your vehicle offer LATCH and if they match with what the car seat manufacturer allows.

For more information on car seats, visit UVMHealth.org/CarSeats (especially the Rear-facing guide) and check out the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) website at HealthyChildren.org for their Car Seat Product Listing (search for "car seats").

Lead Poisoning Prevention

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM LEAD PAINT HAZARDS

Children living in homes built before 1978 are at a greater risk for lead poisoning because lead paint was widely used in these homes. Children can be lead poisoned by ingesting lead dust, eating paint chips, or by chewing on surfaces painted with lead-based paint. As we know, children put everything in their mouths!



Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal. Lead-based paint in and around your home can be a serious health issue. Too much lead in the body can cause serious and lifelong health problems for anyone, but pregnant individuals and children under age 6 are especially at risk because their bodies absorb higher amounts of lead.

Lead-based paint hazards found in paint chips, dust, and soil in and around your home can be dangerous if not in good condition. Opening and closing windows and doors painted with lead-based paint creates invisible dust. Regular cleaning of certain areas in your home will help keep your family healthy and safe from lead dust.



Vermont law requires all children ages 1 & 2 to have their blood lead level tested. If you think your child has been exposed to lead (no matter their age), contact your child's health care provider to schedule a test. The only way to tell if your child has an elevated level is with a simple blood test.

The Vermont Lead Law requires property owners of pre-1978 homes and owners of child-care facilities to complete yearly inspections on their properties to help prevent children from being exposed to lead-based paint hazards.



Preventing Lead Exposure

TIPS FOR CLEANING YOUR HOME

If you are concerned there may be lead paint in your home, follow these cleaning tips to reduce the health impact on your family.

- Always wash your children's hands prior to napping and eating.
- Wash dropped pacifiers and teething toys before giving back to children.
- Clean floors, toys, toy boxes, pacifiers, tables, and areas where food is often eaten or prepared daily.
- Window sills, window wells, tops of baseboards, and any other trim detail or furniture where dust collects should be cleaned weekly; preferably, with gloved hands.
- Pick-up and throw away any visible paint chips in child accessible areas immediately; remember to wash your hands afterwards.
- Use disposable single-use cleaning materials to avoid spreading lead dust to other areas; replace mop pads, sponges, and rags frequently.
- Use wet mops instead of dry sweeping (which moves lead dust around rather than removing it), and a HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) vacuum (which differs from a regular vacuum in that they contain finer filters) if available. If you do not own a HEPA vacuum, borrow one from the Burlington Lead Program for free!



Call

802-865-5323

E-mail

blp@burlingtonvt.gov

Visit

burlingtonvt.gov/blp

TIPS FOR HOME RENOVATION

Assume Paint is Lead-Based

- When working on a building constructed before 1978, presume that all paints and coatings are lead-based (Vermont law).
- Vermont does not recognize the use of swab test kits for paint testing. Always use Lead-Safe Work Practices.
- Prevent unauthorized access to lead work areas.
- Contain the work area with plastic sheeting.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing and equipment, such as a Tyvek suit and respirator.
- Mist or wet down painted surfaces before disturbing paint.
- Wash hands and leave protective clothing away from living areas.
- Always wash your children's hands prior to napping and eating.
- Wash dropped pacifiers and teething toys before children's use.
- Use the methods for cleaning areas under renovation that are described on the previous page.



Avoid These Prohibited Work Practices

- Open flame burning or torching
- Use of heat guns operating at or above 1,100 deg. F
- Dry scraping or dry sanding
- Use of powered sanding or grinding tools
- Hydro-blasting or high-pressure washing
- Abrasive blasting or sandblasting
- Chemical stripping



Reducing Home Fire Risks

FIRE SAFETY ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Learn how to keep your home fire safe before you bring your baby home. What parents don't always recognize are the hidden dangers lurking inside seemingly harmless items. When preparing your home for your baby, don't forget a few basic safety measures.

Be “Alarmed”

- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement. Larger homes may require additional smoke alarms to provide a minimum level of protection.
- Install Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, and in other locations as required by laws, codes, or standards.
- Test smoke & CO alarms at least once a month using the test button.
- Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the alarmS and knows how to respond.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning to keep smoke and CO alarms working.
- Replace all alarms when they are 10 years old.

Have an Escape Plan

- Make a home escape plan. Draw a map of each level of the home. Show all doors and windows. Practice the plan with everyone in your home.
- Plan to wake babies and very young children and help them get out. In your plan, talk about who will help each child get out safely.
- Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open.
- Have an outside meeting place (something permanent, like a tree, light pole, or mailbox) a safe distance in front of the home where firefighters will easily find you.



Keep Children Safe from Fire and Burns



- Keep children 3 feet away from anything that can get hot. Space heaters, grills, and stovetops can cause terrible burns.
- Place items so they cannot be pulled down or knocked over. Keep appliance cords coiled and away from counter edges.
- Keep smoking materials locked up in a high place. Never leave cigarette lighters or matches where children can reach them.
- Never hold a child while you are cooking, drinking a hot liquid, or carrying hot foods or liquids.



PUBLIC EDUCATION SECTION
www.firesafety.vermont.gov



On the Road

Child Passenger Safety

REAR FACING CAR SEATS

A properly installed rear-facing car seat provides the best protection for your new baby and through their toddler years. Here are some general tips about the installation and use of rear-facing car seats. Always read the car seat and vehicle owner's manuals for specifics.



CAR SEAT INSTALLATION

- Babies must ride rear-facing (until at least age 2, by Vermont law) and never in front of an active airbag.
- Use the seat belt or the lower anchors, not both.
- For seat belt installation, the belt must be locked.
- The seat should move less than 1 inch at the belt path.
- Newborns should ride at the maximum allowable recline.



HARNESSING YOUR CHILD

- Route harness straps through the car seat at or below the baby's shoulders.
- Harness straps should be snug—you should not be able to pinch any of the harness webbing (fabric) at the baby's shoulders. Check out this Safe Kids pinch test video at [youtube.com/watch?v=44HT8prdjHg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44HT8prdjHg).
- No bundlers, puffy jackets, snowsuits, or bulky clothes. Cover baby with a blanket after harnessing.
- Do not use products such as inserts and harness covers unless they came in the box with the car seat. After market products can affect harness fit or cause your baby's head to be positioned incorrectly.

Child Passenger Safety

CLEANING A CAR SEAT

- Use mild soap. Do not use bleach, disinfectants, solvents, abrasive cleaners or even “natural” cleaning agents, like lemon juice or vinegar.
- Washing covers by hand and air or towel drying is usually okay. Be sure to follow the directions in the car seat manual.
- The harness straps and buckle strap should be surface cleaned only (not immersed in water). Some harness straps can be removed for “spot cleaning,” but others should not be. Do not iron.

OTHER TIPS

- Register your car seat with the manufacturer and check for recalls.
- If considering a second hand seat, be sure you know its history and that it is not expired or recalled.
- Do not use a car seat as a sleeping area outside of a vehicle. Never leave a child in a car seat with unbuckled or partially buckled straps.
- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle. Create reminders so you check the back seat when you get out of the car. Keep your vehicle locked when you’re not in it. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911.
- Keep children rear-facing until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
- Set a good example: Always buckle up.



See www.uvmhealth.org/carseats for more information about how to keep your child safe in the car, at any age.

Have your seat checked by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician!

To find a fitting station near you check out the following websites:

Vermont: www.BeSeatSmart.org

Anywhere: www.safety-connection.org/caregiver/ (includes virtual options)

On the Go

TRANSPORTING BABY

Between doctors appointments and family outings, baby will have plenty of time exploring the world with you. Baby has a few options on how to travel, and here are some tips to be safe no matter what way you choose!



BABY CARRIERS

- Always place the carrier on a hard, non-elevated surface, like the floor. Soft surfaces, like couches and beds, can cause the carrier to tip causing injuries or suffocation risks to baby. Elevated surfaces create fall risks.
 - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for securing baby to avoid a strangulation or fall hazard.
- Focusing on carrying the carrier and not juggling other items, especially on the stairs to reduce risk of trips and falls.
 - Keep carriers off of shopping carts. According to the AAP, around 23,000 children are treated for injuries from shopping carts each year.

Tight
In view at all times
Close enough to kiss
Keep chin off chest
Supported back



BABY WEARING

- Before baby wearing, familiarize yourself with T.I.C.K.S.
- Avoid hot drinks while baby wearing. If you have to have your coffee, think about using a travel mug or straw to reduce risk of spilling and burning the baby.

BABY WEARING CONTINUED



- Regularly check for wear and tear, especially around buckles and stitching.
- If you have to pick something up, bend at the knee, not the hip, and support baby constantly with one hand.

STROLLERS

- Avoid hanging bags or items from the handles of the stroller. It can cause it to tip backwards.
- Always fully set up or fold the stroller before letting your child near it to avoid pinched fingers and other injuries.
- Use the sidewalk when possible, and walk facing traffic when it isn't.
- Consider increasing the visibility of the stroller with reflective tape or lights for early morning or evening walks.



BABY WALKERS

Baby walkers make baby get and up and go which means even with close supervision, kids can get seriously injured fast. Canada has banned the manufacture and sale of baby walkers and the American Academy of Pediatrics has called for a ban on baby walkers with wheels.

Stationary activity centers and playpens are a safer alternative to baby walkers.



At Play

Instill a Lifelong Love of Water

WHILE KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

The world is 71% water and your child is 100% curious! Safety around water begins with adult supervision. Drowning can happen in seconds and be silent. For infants who do not have much neck and muscle control, 1 inch of water can be deadly. Never leave your baby alone near water OR in the care of a child.



AS YOUR CHILD GROWS

- Ensure that swimming pools are secured with barriers such as a 4 foot fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate.
- Be mindful of the temperature of the water – cold water increases the risk of drowning
- When using an inflatable/portable pool, empty immediately after use and store upside down out of children’s reach.
- Use only Coast Guard Approved Flotation. Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as “floaties.” They are not a substitute for approved life jackets and can give children and parents a false sense of security.
- Choose a Water Watcher – when several adults are present, choose one to be solely responsible for watching children in the water.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs around the water, especially when supervising others.



- Drowning is usually silent. Avoid distractions when your child is around water by putting away phones, having prolonged conversations, or multi-tasking.
- Require your child to swim within designated areas that are within sight of certified lifeguards and guardians.

Teach Them Early

Every child is different, so enrolling them in swim lessons to get comfortable and gain confidence in the water early is critical. Register for swim lessons and teach them about water safety. Many facilities offer lessons beginning at 6 months old.



Water survival skills training through swim lessons can help reduce drowning for children between the ages of 1-4. Classes will introduce parents and children to good habits and start building swim readiness skills such as back floating and breath control while faces are in the water.

Consider working with children who are older, in and out of swim lessons, on these 5 Water Survival Skills:

- Jumping into water over their head and returning to the surface
- Moving from a position on their stomach to their backs and back to stomach
- Floating and treading Water
- Breathing with forward movement in the water towards safety
- How to exit the water

GET CERTIFIED

Become certified in infant and child first aid and CPR. All caregivers should know how to provide emergency help. This will protect your entire family. You can often find these programs at your local YMCA, Parks & Recreation Department, hospital, or fire station.

Keep Yourself Safe

TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS

Unintentional injuries can cause unnecessary complications during pregnancy. Studies have shown that the two leading causes of unintentional injury during pregnancy are car crashes (which is why it's important to properly wear your seatbelt!) and falls.

The truth is pregnancy shifts your center of gravity, which can make it harder to stay upright and balanced, especially on uneven surfaces. Hormones during pregnancy can impact your joints, making them more prone to dislocation and other injuries. Adding the exhaustion, the unexpected symptoms and stress, and trying to get everything done before baby arrives, and you have increased risks for accidental trips and falls.

Fortunately, there are a few ways to help reduce your risk!

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- Check the treads on your shoes. You want to make sure they have some texture and aren't worn smooth.
- Check your shoe size! If your shoe size has changed over the course of the pregnancy, your shoes may now be too small. Shoes that are too small or too loose can increase your risk for trips and falls.
- Skip the socks (unless they have grips) and wear supportive, rubber soled slippers around the house. Avoid flip-flops and similar footwear.
- Flat shoes with good arch support are great, especially for uneven or unpredictable surfaces, like trails or yards.



EXERCISES

- The risk of injury from exercising is low. In fact, exercising may help reduce your risk of falling while pregnant.
- Choose exercises that focus on balance and strength or are designed specifically for pregnant individuals.

Falls Prevention

AROUND THE HOUSE

- Stairs are a common location of falls. Keep the stairs cleared of clutter.
- If you have a wooden staircase, check out treads or nonslip sprays that can increase traction.
- Always hold on to the railing when going up or down stairs.
- Check your rugs to make sure they have non-slip backs or non-slip tape to keep the edges down.
- Use a nonslip bath mat in the shower or tub (being sure to put it down when the surface is dry) or get some cute nonslip stickers.
- Keep electrical cords tucked away against walls or behind furniture.



TALK TO A MEDICAL PROVIDER

- If you have concerns about feeling dizzy or off balance, you may have an underlying condition that can increase your risk of falling.
 - Stay hydrated. When you are dehydrated, you increase your risk for dizziness.
 - If you do fall, contact your medical provider. If you have abdominal pain or bleeding, seek emergency care right away.



Babies and Pets

HOW TO PREPARE

So many changes come before and after your baby's arrival! While you understand the reason for the changes to your normal pre-baby household routine, your pet does not. They will need your help and guidance adjusting to new routines. Preparing ahead by introducing some of the changes now can make the transition smoother for everyone, especially for a dog. This way your dog can learn and become comfortable with what they need to know before baby arrives. Here are a few tips to make the transition a bit easier for both you and your pet.



Start Early

- Review your pets' behaviors and focus on training good behaviors. If your dog tends to jump, bark, push or try to dash out the door when visitors arrive or when you return home, now is the time to teach alternative behaviors, such as sitting, going to a mat, or fetching a toy.
- Unpack baby furniture and gear as early as possible to give your pets time to adjust.
- Simulate new behaviors like walking around with a doll or rolled up blanket while interacting with your pets or play sound clips of babies crying. Reward your pet for remaining calm.
- Create separate safe spaces by setting up easy-to-use walk-through baby gates, play pens or barriers in the home that will allow your dog to see you and hear you, rest on a bed, play with toys and relax in comfy areas without feeling isolated or punished.
- Make sure your pets are up-to-date on their vaccines and medications. Your veterinarian may also have recommendations on how to introduce the baby based specifically on your pet's temperament.

While You Are Pregnant

While the risk of infection is low, cats can carry a parasite that you can be exposed to through their litter boxes. The infection is called toxoplasmosis. If you've owned cats for a while, you might already have immunity. You can ask your doctor to test for immunity through a blood test. You can also reduce your risk of exposure by having someone else scoop the litter until after the baby is born.



Coming Home

- Have your pet in their safe area when you first bring baby home.
- Have your pet sniff baby's blanket before introducing them.
- Give your pet access to their designated kid free spot so they can retreat to it if they feel overwhelmed.
- Make sure doors to baby's sleep areas are shut solidly and cannot be opened by a dog or cat.



As everyone adjusts

- Set aside some hangout time with your pets. Help your dog not be anxious about the change in activity in the house by continuing to engage in regular play time and walk time.
- Pets should not have access to the baby's nursery or other areas where baby will be unless you are with the animal.
- Always **actively** supervise interactions between baby and your pets. Any pet can accidentally hurt a child when excited or distracted.
- Remember, as your baby starts exploring, keep pet food and pet treats out of reach. They can be choking hazards.
- Feed your dog or cat in a designated area that is not accessible by children. Children should leave dogs and cats alone when eating or chewing on a toy.

Wash your hands

Children under age 5 are more likely to get sick from germs that animals can sometimes carry. Always wash your hands after playing, feeding, or cleaning up after pets, especially before breastfeeding or preparing formula. Remember also that regular veterinary visits are essential to keeping your pets and family healthy.



For more information about safety for children and dogs, see the Safe Kids Vermont Dog Smart Program at uvmhealth.org/SafeKidsVT.



At Home

Safe Sleep for Babies

ABC'S: ALONE, BACK, CRIB



The key principles of Safe Sleep are as follows:

- Place your baby to sleep on their back in a safety-approved crib on a firm mattress every time during naps and at nighttime.
- Remove all loose bedding, comforters, quilts, sheepskins, stuffed animals, bumpers, wedges, and pillows from your baby's crib.
- Do not use **weighted** sleepers or swaddles. Regular swaddles are okay until babies start trying to roll over, usually around 2 months old.
- Your baby should not sleep with others in a bed, on a couch, or in a chair.
- Keep your baby's sleep area close but separate from where others sleep.
- Avoid overheating. Dress infants for the environment, with no greater than one layer more than an adult would wear to be comfortable. Babies should not wear hats indoors except when newly born or in the NICU.
- Offer your baby a pacifier at nap time and bedtime. Pacifiers may help prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Safe Sleep principles have changed over the years, so be sure to review them with any friends or family members that may watch the baby or put them to bed, whether for a nap or for the night.

A Safe Sleep Area

WHAT DO YOU REALLY NEED?

Many of the products advertised to parents are not only unnecessary, but completely unsafe! Crib bumpers should never be used as they increase risk of suffocation for infants.

So what should be on your shopping list?

- A crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that has a flat sleep area that meets current safety guidelines
- A firm crib mattress
- A fitted sheet

And that's it!

Blankets, stuffed animals, and mattress toppers are all **unsafe** to have in an infant's sleep area.



Hand-Me-Downs

IS SECOND HAND WORTH THE RISK?

Your parents may still have the crib from when you were born, but it doesn't meet updated safety standards. If you want to keep it, repurpose it into a stuffed animal holder or something similar for when your child is older. Make sure infants sleep in a bassinet or crib that meets current Federal safety standards.

If a friend or family member wants to give you a bassinet or crib that they purchased and used for their own child in recent years, you may be tempted to say yes. Before you officially accept, look up the manufacturer and model to ensure that there were no recalls for the product and that it is approved by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. For instance, inclined sleepers were recalled after being associated with infant fatalities. If it is not recalled and up to current safety standards, check for any loose or missing hardware that could make it unsafe for your child.

For more information about safe sleep, see uvmhealth.org/safesleep.

Child-Proofing

WHEN TO START

Although babies may not start crawling and moving around the house until they are 6 to 10 months old, it is easier to start child-proofing before baby arrives or gets close to being independent. First, get down on the level of an infant. From this point of view, you can survey your house for its unique risks and dangers. Do you have breakable decorations in easy reach that need to be moved to higher shelves? Do you see any tiny objects that could be a choking hazard if swallowed?



Once you have an idea of your space, make a list of the potential dangers you want to correct before baby finds them. Some of your childproofing may be accomplished by rearranging your home, but for some of it you may need special equipment, like safety gates, cabinet locks, or outlet covers. Knowing what and how much of each item you will need to baby proof early means you can add them to registry and use those discounts.

If you have firearms in your home, store them unloaded and the ammunition separate from the firearm itself. Another recommended layer of protection is keeping firearms locked, using a cable or trigger lock (often available for free in your community), lock boxes, or a gun safe.



How you child-proof will also depend on if you are owning or renting, and if you are allowed to drill into the walls or cabinets. There are many styles of safety equipment that will allow you to find one that helps child-proof your space without giving up your deposit. Before you start purchasing and installing your safety equipment, talk to your landlord about your safety concerns in the space. They may help in providing safer options or give permission to drill into the walls specifically for child-proofing.

Furniture Tip Over

STRAPS AND ANCHORS

From televisions to dressers and bookshelves, it's important to connect tippable furniture and large electronics to the walls or to the piece of furniture they are on with an anchor or strap.

Children climbing or reaching on furniture and objects can have enough weight to cause a tip over. Tip overs can result in serious injuries and even death.



Stairs

BABY GATES

Baby gates are an important tool for preventing baby from tumbling down the stairs, but they are also great for keeping them out of rooms that aren't infant friendly.

For rooms and the bottom of the stairs, pressure mounted gates are great. For the top of the stairs, you want a hard-mounted, or screw installed gate.

Windows

CORDS AND LOCKS

Moving furniture (especially cribs!) away from windows is a great place to start.

Next, check if the window coverings have long cords or loops. If they do, replace, cut, or secure them to the wall to prevent strangulation.

To prevent falls out the window, place locks or guards that don't allow the window to open more than 4 inches, which is a smaller opening than most infants' heads.





Water in the Home

PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS

Be sure to never leave your baby alone near water OR in the care of another young child – especially in the bathtub! Most child drownings in the home occur in the bathtub and more than half of the deaths involve a child under the age of one. How do you prevent this tragedy?

- Have any bath supplies close so you can keep your baby within arm's reach at all times.
- If you have to answer the door or forgot something, bring baby with you. Even if it'll only take a second, *never* leave baby in the tub.
- Infant bath seats can give a false sense of security to parents and caregivers and are designed as bathing aid, *NOT* safety devices.
- Be mindful of the water temperature. Babies have thin skin and can be burned at lower temperatures than adults. To prevent serious burns or chills, aim for bathwater for be about 100° F by doing the elbow test or by using a bath thermometer.



BATHROOMS

- Install a latch or doorknob cover on bathroom doors to avoid infants from getting in without supervision.
- Put toilet lids down and install safety latches or locks to keep them from being lifted up.
- Depending on the style of your tub, consider keeping the drain plug outside of the tub and out of reach of your child so if they turn the faucet on, the tub won't fill with water.

YARDS AND GARDENS

- Empty all buckets, large water bowls, recycling bins, and coolers of any water immediately after you are done using them.
- When not in use, secure any buckets and pails used for cleaning or painting with a lid.
- Identify water hazards in your yard such as wells, drainage ditches, or ponds and consider how to block your child from reaching them.

POOLS AND HOT TUBS

- Drowning is usually silent. Avoid distractions when your child is around water by putting away phones, having prolonged conversations, or multi-tasking.
- Depending when your pool was installed, find out if your drains and other suction are fitted with anti-entrapment covers or safety vacuum-release systems.
- A fence at least four feet tall should surround the pool or hot tub on all sides and have a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Install a door alarm to let you know when your child accesses the backyard without your supervision.





Choking Hazards

AROUND THE HOME

Babies love to explore their surroundings and part of that exploration is putting anything and everything they find into their mouths. It is important when childproofing and living your day to day life to keep small objects off the floor and out of baby's reach.

This can be incredibly difficult if you have older children in the house as their toys may be hazardous for baby. You can check the toy packaging for warnings, such as choking hazard, or for the age guidelines. If you no longer have the packaging, you can easily conduct a choke test at home. While you can purchase a choke test cylinder, a toilet paper tube is very similar in size and design. If the object or toy can fit through the toilet paper roll, that it can fit in the mouth and throat of a child under the age of 3.

Even if a toy or object passes the choke test, it's still important to monitor what your child puts in their mouth and anything that is 'close' to fitting should still be stored out of reach.

This doesn't mean the older children have to stop using their toys, it only means that it's important to keep their toys away from baby. Try to set up separate play areas or keep baby confined in a playpen while the older child plays with those specific toys. Let the older children know that sharing is important, but sharing these specific toys with baby is dangerous.

Solid Foods

FINGER FOODS AND PUREES

When you start transitioning to solid food, leave out the hard foods like raw fruit, nuts, hot dogs, popcorn, and candy. Foods that are uncooked, whole, or in certain shapes can be choking hazards for infants. Cutting up food into thin, small pieces can help prevent choking. Additionally, cooking foods, like vegetables and fruit, longer until they can be mashed also helps to prevent choking.



Infant CPR and First Aid

IT'S A LIFE SAVING SKILL

If you've taken a CPR class before, they probably covered both adult and infant methods. If you haven't, you can learn the skills online.

The Red Cross offers step by step directions and videos that walk you through the process for what to do for both conscious and unconscious choking.

Magnets and Button Batteries

NOT A TOY

Magnets, especially little high-powered ones, may not seem like a choking hazard. The real risk around magnets is they can cause serious internal injuries when they connect inside the child's digestive track. It is best to keep large magnet sets out of the home, as it is difficult to tell if any are missing. Symptoms of ingested magnets are similar to common childhood illnesses and include abdominal pain, vomiting, and fever.

Button batteries, like those found in common household electronics, are a choking hazard and can also cause severe tissue burns when ingested or stuck in an ear or up a nose. If a child is suspected of ingesting a magnet or button battery seek emergency care as soon as possible.

Preventing Accidental Poisoning

KEEPING BABY SAFE FROM MEDICATIONS AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD ITEMS



Many items in and around your home can be poisonous and a risk for an exploring baby. Making a mistake when giving a child medication is another cause of household poisonings.

The most common things young children get into are medications, vitamins and supplements, cleaning products, personal care products like lotions and toothpaste, plants and mushrooms, and pesticides like ant traps and bug spray. Some of the most serious poisonings involve prescription pain medications, cannabis, and ADHD medications.



Cleaning Products



Personal Care Products



Plants and Mushrooms



Medications



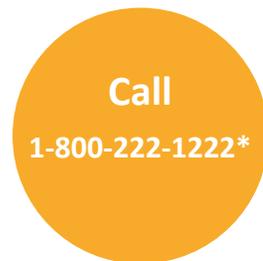
Northern New England

Poison Center

MAKING YOUR HOME SAFER

Here are some tips from the Northern New England Poison Center to help you prevent poisonings in your home, for both children and adults:

- Store all potential poisons up high, out of reach of children, in a locked cabinet if possible. Keep purses, luggage and diaper bags out of reach of children as well.
- Store non-food items separately from all food and drink.
- Put the cap back on immediately and put products away as soon as you are finished using them.
- Read the label on medications, cleaners, and other products, and carefully follow the instructions each time you use them.
- When giving medication to a child, use the measuring tool provided with the medication or another marked measuring tool like a teaspoon or tablespoon. Do not use kitchen spoons.
- Do not call medication “candy.”
- Get rid of products you no longer need, such as expired medications or old pesticides, safely and promptly. Call your town office for guidance on disposal.
- Visit nnepc.org for many more safety tips and information on common potential poisons.
- Save the Poison Center contact information in your phone. The Poison Center is staffed by specially trained nurses and pharmacists who provide fast, expert, free help. With this help, 95% of poisonings involving young children can be treated at home.



* This is a national number.



Parenthood and Stress

A baby brings an unlimited amount of love, joy, and happiness into your life. Unfortunately, a baby can also bring a lot of stress! Even the most patient parents can feel stress when giving an infant constant attention and care! If you feel your stress level increasing, here are some ways to cope:

HOW TO PARENT BABIES SAFELY

- **Walk Away** – put the baby in a safe place, like a crib, and leave the room. It's okay to let the baby cry.
- **Move Your Body** – Regular exercise releases endorphins, a chemical in the brain that can improve your mood and help you feel less stressed.
- **Breathe Deeply** – Take slow, deep breaths to slow your heart rate and reduce tension.
- **Make Time for Yourself** – Keep your stress levels low by setting aside time each week to do an activity that is just for you. Whatever you enjoy, do it!
- **Smile** – Studies show that smiling and laughing make you feel better.
- **Call a Friend** – Calling a friend allows you to vent when you are frustrated.
- **Ask for Help** – Friends, neighbors, relatives, and professionals are a great help when things get tough. Just ask!

Nurturing Babies

9 WAYS TO SOOTHE A CRYING BABY

1. Meet the baby's basic needs. Try feeding the baby, see if they need a diaper change, or to be burped. Is the baby too hot or cold? Check the clothing for comfort.
2. Is the baby sick? Check the baby's temperature. Is it 100.5 or over? Is there vomiting or diarrhea? Is so, call your doctor.
3. Hold the baby close and gently massage them.
4. Rock, walk, or dance with your baby, or try a swing or bouncy chair.
5. Sing and or talk to your baby.
6. Hold baby and breathe slowly and calmly. The baby may feel your calmness and become quiet.
7. Lower any surrounding noise or lights.
8. Ask for help from a friend or relative who is good at caring for babies.
9. When nothing else works put the baby down in a safe place, like a crib, give yourself a break and leave the room. Check on the baby every 10-15 minutes.

Remember, no baby has ever died from crying!

For more information please visit www.pcavt.org or call 2-1-1



MORE ABOUT A CRYING BABY

The “Period of PURPLE Crying” is a program designed and approved by pediatricians, public health nurses, child development experts, and parents. PURPLE is an acronym describing what’s happening during this phase of your baby’s development.

Peak of crying. Your baby may cry more every week. This often peaks during month 2 and tapers off, usually by the end of month 5.

Unexpected. Your baby’s crying comes and goes and you cannot find any apparent reason.

Resists soothing. Your baby continues to cry no matter how you try to comfort them.

Pain-like face. Your baby might look like they are in pain even though they are not.

Long-lasting. During this understandably stressful time, crying can occur for several hours a day.

Evening. It’s common for babies in the PURPLE crying period to cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

Some important things to know are that this is a period, meaning it **will** end. And, it is a normal developmental phase. Remember, never shake your baby, no matter how frustrated you get. This can cause bleeding, bruising and swelling in your baby’s brain. Follow the tips outlined in the previous page, especially asking for help and taking a break.



Babysitters

HOW TO FIND AND PREPARE

Finding a babysitter for the first time can seem overwhelming. It can be difficult to leave your child with a person who isn't you to care for them. Luckily, there are some steps you can take to make sure you find the babysitter right for you and your baby.

- 1) Recommendations! Ask friends or neighbors for recommendations for babysitters they have used and liked. Look for reviews and recommendations from local families on sites like Facebook parent groups or front porch forum.
- 2) Set up a meeting with the babysitter ahead of time. You can ask for references to check with and about their experience and training. Consider someone who has gone through a babysitting course or clinic, such as a 4-H or American Red Cross offering. Confirm they have had first aid training and know CPR.

*It's recommended babysitters be at least 13 years old and mature enough to handle common emergencies.

PREPARING THE BABYSITTER

To help your child and babysitter have the best experience together, consider having the babysitter spend time with your baby while you are home so they can learn their personalities and routines. Here are other ideas for you to consider:

- Give the babysitter a tour of the house.
- Educate the sitter on any special medical needs your baby might have, such as allergies, and what to do if a medical emergency occurs.
- Share your family fire escape plan and where emergency supplies, like flashlights or first aid kits, are kept.
- Write out or discuss your child's feeding, bathing, and sleeping preferences as well as where key items are stored.
- If the babysitter will be transporting your baby, install their car seat in their car.

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