

# Keeping Your Baby Safe From Two to Four Years

Did you know that accidents are the number one cause of death and permanent disability in infants and children in the United States? Every month nearly 300 children under 4 years old die as a result of accidents. Many others are seriously injured but survive with permanent handicaps.

Most accidents could be prevented. They happen because parents don't know what their children can do to get hurt and don't take the necessary steps to protect them. Don't let your child become a statistic. Follow these suggestions to keep your child safe.

**Use an Automobile Safety Seat:** As your child grows, check to be sure that he does not exceed the weight limit of his car seat. That weight should be printed on the car seat's label. Children continue to need some sort of car seat or booster seat until they are approximately eight years old because lap belts and shoulder belts designed for adults do not fit them safely. If your child rides on a booster seat of the type that allows him to wear the adult belts, be sure that the lap belt is positioned low across his pelvic bones. Belts that ride high across the abdomen can cause injury in the event of an accident.

**Keep Guns Safely Stored:** The best way to prevent accidents involving guns is not to have any guns in the house. If you choose to have guns in the house, they must be stored in such a way that it is impossible for a child to find and use them. Guns should be stored unloaded with a trigger lock and/or in a locked container or closet, and ammunition should be stored in a separate place. All parents should teach their children that guns are dangerous, not toys. Children should be taught that if they see a gun, at a friend's house for instance, they should (1) not touch it, (2) leave the area and (3) tell an adult immediately. A loaded gun in the bedside table is a fatal accident waiting to happen.

**Prevent Poisonings:** Your child is now able to open drawers and cabinets, perhaps even those with safety latches. Be sure dangerous household cleaners and medications are safely stored out of reach. Keep all your medications in bottles with safety caps. Don't store non-food liquids like gasoline or kerosene in drink bottles.

**Avoid Burns:** Don't leave hot irons or curling irons where your child can reach them. The kitchen is a dangerous place for a small child. Find something safe for her to do while you're cooking so she's not underfoot. Keep the handles of your pots and pans turned in over the top of the stove, not out over the edge where your child might reach them. Don't leave cups of hot coffee or tea where your child can grab and spill them. If you haven't already done so, adjust the temperature of your hot water heater down to 120-130° to avoid accidental scald burns in the bathtub.

**Water Safety:** Never leave your child alone in the bathtub or a wading pool, even for a minute! Never leave your child unsupervised in a yard with a swimming pool. If you or your neighbors have a swimming pool, be sure it's protected by a fence and a gate with a latch too high for a child to reach. A child can drown in less time than it takes for you to answer the telephone.