

The 10 biggest safety mistakes parents make

1st Biggest safety mistake: Failure to buckle up your child.

Be a proud and concerned parent, let your friends and family know that no matter how harmless the car ride seems to them or inconvenient your insistence is, you will not risk your child's safety by putting them in a car without a car seat and neither should they. If you are traveling there are lighter weight, collapsible, car seats made specifically for travel, one brand is the Tote n' Go *by Safety 1st*.

2nd Biggest safety mistake: Ignoring car seat manufacturer recommendations.

Approximately 85% of children riding in child safety seats are improperly restrained.ⁱ

To find out if your car seats are properly installed, go to www.seatcheck.org and find a car seat inspection station near you.

When correctly installed and used, child safety seats reduce the risk of death by 70% for infants and 47%-54% for toddlers and reduce the need for hospitalization by 69% for children aged 4 years and younger.ⁱⁱ

The following misuses were even more likely to result in serious injury or death in the event of a severe crash:

- Infants placed rear facing in front of an active air bag, .2 percent (12 cases)
- Children turned forward facing before reaching 1 year of age and 20 pounds, 11 percent (696 cases)ⁱⁱⁱ

3rd Biggest safety mistake: Not exercising enough caution when walking or strolling in parking lots and streets.

Of 4,641 pedestrians who died nationwide in 2004, 363 were 14 and younger.^{iv}

- Be alert. Don't assume a driver has seen you. Before you cross in front of a car, make sure that the driver sees you and stops. Try to make eye contact with the driver^v. Want [your] stroller to be as visible as possible? Put a tall bright flag on it.^{vi}

- Cross at the crosswalk only, and wait for the walk signal or green light. Even if it is perfectly clear, wait for the signal, you'll be teaching your child an important habit.
- Don't cross if you notice that drivers are experiencing sun glare. A driver experiencing sun glare is driving blind!

4th Biggest safety mistake: Not teaching your child to swim.

Did you know that children can drown in as little as one inch of water?^{vii}

Drowning: in order of most common^{viii}.

- Drowning while swimming in pool.
- Drowning while swimming in natural water.
- Drowning after falling into a pool.
- Drowning during a bath.
- Drowning by falling into natural water.
- Drowning by falling into bathtub.

Water and Drowning Safety:

- Use a fence with a locking gate to keep children away from your pools or other bodies of water.
- Empty and turn over all water containers.
- Teach children to swim when they're ready, usually after age 4.
- Tell your children never run, push, or jump on others around water.
- Teach children to use the buddy system, never swim alone.
- Always watch children near water. Don't leave, even for a moment.^{ix}
- Go to www.clubswim.com and find a swim instructor or swim school near you.

A parents' suggestion:

Make bath time a bonding experience. If you have something cooking, turn down the heat so you won't have to save something from burning in the middle of bath time.

Turn off your phone ringer or let the answering machine pick it up. It's a great opportunity to prove to your child that they are more important than a phone call.

5th Biggest safety mistake: Neglecting to change the batteries in your smoke detectors and/or not having smoke detectors placed correctly.

- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement, making sure that there is an alarm outside every separate sleeping area.
- Newly constructed homes are required to have a smoke alarm in every sleeping room and all smoke alarms must be interconnected.^x
- Working smoke detectors give you early warning of a fire and more than double your chance of surviving a fire.
- Test your detectors each month to make sure they are working.
- Change your battery twice a year. When you change your clocks in the Spring and Fall, change your battery.
- Replace your detectors with new ones after ten years.
- When the smoke detector alarm sounds, get out fast! Call the fire department from a neighbor's house or other safe location.
- Plan your escape. Know two ways out of every room.
- Once out, stay out.
- Have family fire drills (a.k.a. "Exit Drills In The Home" or EDITH) at least twice a year.^{xi}

A parents' suggestion:

Don't disable your alarm, if it's sounding because of cooking smoke, turn off whatever you're cooking and use the opportunity to practice your family fire drills.

6th Biggest safety mistake: Allowing children to play with toys that are dangerous or inappropriate for their age.

Most toy related deaths occur when a child chokes on a small ball, other toys, or in incidents involving tricycles and other riding toys being struck by motor vehicles or being ridden into swimming pools.

The CPSC recommends using the following tips to help choose appropriate toys for children:

- Select toys to suit the age, abilities, skills and interest level of the intended child. Toys too advanced may pose safety hazards to younger children.
- For infants, toddlers and all children who still mouth objects, avoid toys with small parts, which could pose a fatal choking hazard.
- Look for sturdy construction, such as tightly secured eyes, noses and other potential small parts.

- For all children under 8, avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.
- Do not purchase electric toys with heating elements for children under 8.
- Be a label reader. Look for toy labels that give age and safety recommendations and use that information as a guide.
- Check toy instructions for clarity – for both you and, when appropriate, the child.
- Immediately discard plastic wrappings on toys, which can cause suffocation.
- Subscribe to toy and other recalls at www.recalls.gov

7th Biggest safety mistake: Giving your child foods that can cause choking.

10 TOP CHOKING FOODS FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 4^{xii}

- Apples: Always chop into bite-sized pieces or cook until soft.
- Carrots: Raw carrots should be shredded or cooked until mushy.
- Celery: Remove the stringy parts with a peeler and cut it up.
- Grapes: Cut them in half and remove the seeds.
- Hot Dogs: They must be cut up. Slice lengthwise first, and then chop into pieces.
- Hard Candy: Do not give to children under 4.
- Peanut Butter: Spread it thinly on bread and serve with a beverage. Do not serve large clumps of peanut butter by itself.
- Nuts: Should not be served to children under 4.
- Popcorn: Should not be served to children under 4.
- Raisins: Should not be served to children under 2.
2 - 4 year olds should be served plump, moist raisins.

8th Biggest safety mistake: Leaving a child unattended on a bed, at a table, and near stairs.

Unintentional Falls are the leading cause of Non-Fatal injuries in the U.S.

- Use bed rails.
- Always strap a baby into a high chair, swing, changing table or strollers.
- Keep chairs, cribs and other furniture away from windows.
- Don't leave a baby alone on a changing table, bed, couch or other furniture. Keep one hand on the baby while changing diapers.

- Teach children to use playgrounds or playing fields with rubber, wood, mulch or sand surfaces. Grass and dirt are not as good at preventing serious injuries. Avoid asphalt.
- Use safety gates or other barriers at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Get rid of hazards in the home like folded carpets, electric wires or cords on the floor, and unlit stairways.^{xiii}

9th Biggest Safety mistake: Allowing your child access to poisonous substances.

Call 800-222-1222 from any location to be connected to your local poison control center.

- Read labels and find out which household products or plants are poisonous. If you are not sure about something, keep it where children can't reach it.
- Lock up poisons and medicines out of sight and reach of children.
- Don't take medicine in front of children. They might try to copy you.
- Never leave potentially poisonous household products unattended while you are using them.
- Throw away old medicines and cleaning products.
- All consumers should use child-resistant packaging and store medicine out of sight and out of reach whenever young children are around.^{xiv}

10th Biggest Safety mistake: Not making yourself and your child aware of local natural dangers.

Injuries in order of most common:^{xv}

- Exposure to excessive natural heat – heed whether report warnings, dress you child appropriately, make sure that your child remains hydrated, make sure your car is empty before parking and locking up.
- Bitten or struck by dog – teach your children not to play with strange dogs
- Bitten or struck by other animal - teach your children about the dangers of local species in your area or areas you are visiting.
- Exposure to excessive natural cold - heed whether report warnings, and dress your child appropriately.
- Bites by venomous snakes and lizards – educate yourself and your children as to which poisonous reptiles are common to the area, and learn how to take precautions and what to do in case of a bite.

- Stings by hornets, wasps, and bees – if your child is allergic, ask your physician about carrying an epinephrine pen at all times.

- Lightning strikes.^{xvi}

If you are indoors:

- Do not handle any electrical equipment or telephones because lightning could follow the wire. Television sets are particularly dangerous at this time. Avoid bathtubs, water faucets, and sinks because metal pipes can transmit electricity.

If you are outdoors:

- Attempt to get into a building or car.
- If no structure is available, get to an open space and squat low to the ground as quickly as possible. (If in the woods, find an area protected by low clump of trees - never stand underneath a single large tree in the open.)
- Avoid tall structures such as towers, tall trees, fences, telephone lines, or power lines.
- Stay away from natural lightning rods such as golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles, or camping equipment.
- Stay away from rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water.
- If you are isolated in a level field or prairie and you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike), bend forward, putting your hands on your knees. A position with feet together and crouching while removing all metal objects is recommended. Do not lie flat on the ground.

ⁱ American Journal of Preventative Medicine

ⁱⁱ The Guide to Community Preventive Services/Motor Vehicle Occupant Injuries

^{iii, vii} Safe Kids, USA

^{iv, v} National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

^{vi} Citizen-Times.com

^{viii, xv} National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

^{ix, xiii, xvi} Safe Kids, Worldwide

^x National Fire Protection Association

^{xi} NYS Department of State, Office of Fire Prevention and Control

^{xii} United Way of Central New York

^{xvi} Nassau County Emergency Management



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