Accidents and child development
The Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) is a national charity committed to preventing and reducing the number of children and young people killed, disabled and seriously injured as a result of accidents. It provides information, briefing advice and training services to professionals. It organises high profile safety campaigns.

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Accidents and child development
The challenge

Every year, some two million children – that’s about one in five – are seen at hospital Accident and Emergency Units after suffering an unintentional injury. Around 250 children die each year as the result of accidents. These stark facts give an indication of how great a challenge parents, carers and practitioners face in trying to keep children safe.

There is, however, a good deal about which to be positive. Very many of these injuries are preventable. With education, information and the right equipment, we can make a difference to these unacceptable statistics. Childhood deaths from accidental injuries have consistently fallen over recent years, due to legislation, improved safety standards, education campaigns and better medical care. Attendance at hospital continues to be high, however, and there is no room for complacency.

The Guides

An increasing focus on early years learning, development and care brings new opportunities to safeguard children, to promote their safety, health and well-being, and to support parents, carers and practitioners in their day-to-day work with children in many different settings.

This Guide is one of a series of four publications addressing topics in child safety and injury prevention. They are aimed at anyone involved with the safety or care of children who has the opportunity to promote safety to parents, carers and decision-makers, or control the environment where children spend their time.

Each Guide addresses a particular issue related to child safety and focuses particularly on the actual experiences of field workers. The principles behind these Guides are:

- to share the experiences of practitioners with a wider audience so that effective interventions can be publicised and common pitfalls avoided
- to get child safety messages and accident prevention strategies to families on low incomes and those whose first language is not English – two groups who are particularly at risk from accidents.

The four Guides in the series are:

- Accidents and child development
- Preventing childhood accidents: Guidance on effective action
- Safety equipment schemes
- Safety in day care and play settings

In addition to these Guidelines, we publish information packs, posters and other resources for professionals working with children and families. We also publish a wide variety of leaflets and booklets aimed at parents and carers themselves. See our website www.capt.org.uk for further information.

Join our mailing list! It’s free and you will receive regular news and information about new awareness campaigns, resources and resource promotions – see page 36.
Accidental injury in childhood is so common that, sadly, we accept it as an inevitable and unavoidable part of growing up. But while it is impossible to prevent every minor bump and graze, there is much that can be done to prevent more serious injury if parents, carers and practitioners are aware of the links between accidental injury and a child’s physical, intellectual and emotional development.

This Guide aims to give practitioners an overview of why injuries to children happen and what can be done to prevent them. It concentrates mostly on providing a clear and straightforward guide to the relationship between child development and accidental injury, in order to widen understanding as to why injuries occur.

We have divided the Guide into a child’s different stages of development and age. Each section is then sub-divided into:

- Facts and statistics*
- Abilities and characteristics
- Types of accidents and safety tips
- Education.

It can be difficult to walk the line between keeping children safe from accidental injury and over-protecting them. The Trust has always advocated the child’s right to explore his/her surroundings with as little interference from adults as possible. However, we also believe that children have the right to grow up in an environment in which they can test their limits without the risk of serious injury. By understanding the relationship between a child’s abilities and the injuries they incur, both practitioners and parents can be better equipped to recognise potential danger and minimise it where possible.

This publication is not intended as a complete guide to injury prevention – that would take several volumes. What we do hope is that it provides a useful backdrop to your work with children and their parents and carers.

A word about age and ability

We have deliberately used developmental stages rather than ages when talking about babies and younger children. Although there are generally accepted age bands when children are likely to reach a certain point in their development (e.g. most children have started standing or walking by 12 months) every child is different and will reach the various developmental milestones in their own time.

Children have an unnerving knack of catching their parents and carers out and doing something – whether it is crawling, walking or whatever – before the text books tell you they should be doing it. One of the most common phrases heard from parents after a child has been injured is “I didn’t know she could do that” – whether “that” was crawling for the first time, unscrewing a bottle top or climbing through a window. Telling a parent that their baby will not be able to roll over until they are four months old is potentially dangerous if that baby manages to roll at three days and is on a changing table at the time. So when we do quote an age or age range, it is only intended as a guide. Please remind parents that they know their child best and they need to be one step ahead in safety at all times.

We have divided each chapter into types of injury. Some of the information and advice given will apply to more than one age or stage – for example, smoke alarms are essential safety devices whatever a child’s age – but it will be mentioned in each chapter to which it is applicable to ensure that each section is complete in itself.

* The statistics presented in each chapter come from the Department for Transport, the former Department of Trade and Industry and the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. For up-to-date statistics, see links at end of Guidelines (page 32).
Birth to crawling
protection and prevention

Facts and statistics

Every year:

● around 22,000 babies under six months are injured in accidents
● four in five of these accidents happen in the home.

Abilities and characteristics

Very young babies depend utterly on their parents and carers for all their needs. They have absolutely no control over their environment and need an adult to keep them healthy and safe.

New-born babies have:

● very thin skin – some fifteen times thinner than an adult’s
● very large heads compared to their bodies
● a skull that is still fusing together, leaving a ‘soft spot’ – the fontanel – on top
● immature bone development
● little or no voluntary control over their limited movement
● the ability to grip an object if it is placed in their hands
● the ability to lift their heads for two or three seconds
● the ability to wriggle, kick and flail their arms.

Before babies acquire more deliberate movement such as reaching or rolling, any accidental injury they suffer is generally as a result of someone else’s actions, rather than their own, so it is entirely down to parents and carers to keep babies safe from harm.

By three months, babies may be able to:

● roll over independently when placed on their backs or stomachs (although babies of a few days may wriggle their way over while flailing arms and legs about)
● reach for and grasp an object.

By six months, babies may be able to:

● remain in a sitting position on the floor
● roll greater distances to get to objects
● do simple manual tasks such as pushing and pulling
● start crawling.

Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

Falls

From raised surfaces Babies can suffer serious injury in falls from comparatively low levels. Even the youngest baby can wriggle his or her way to the edge of a bed or changing table if left unattended. Sometimes the movement is not even that of the baby – in the US recently, a baby suffered a skull fracture after his parents strapped him into his baby car seat and left him on top of a washing machine in mid-cycle. The vibration of the machine moved the car seat far enough to tip the baby off the edge onto the floor.

Many parents use baby-bouncing chairs, but if these are left on a table or work surface even the small movements of a baby could cause the chair to move enough to fall.

Safety tips

● Babies should never be left unattended while on a raised surface
● Nappy changing is safest done on the floor
● Baby car seats and bouncing chairs should always be placed on the floor.
**Down stairs** One of the most common ways for a baby of this age to be injured on the stairs is when s/he is being carried by a parent or carer and they slip or trip. Busy parents will take other objects up and down stairs while carrying their child, leaving no hands free to hold on.

Toys and other objects left on the stairs can also cause falls, as can other children playing on or around the staircase. Children have also been injured when the adult carrying them has tried to climb over the safety gate rather than opening it and tripped.

Young children should not be allowed to carry the baby up or down the stairs.

**Safety tips**

- Stairs should be kept clear of clutter
- Anyone carrying a baby or child up or down stairs should keep one hand free to hold on
- Before a baby starts to crawl or climb, a safety gate or barrier is needed at the bottom of the stairs to stop him or her starting to climb the stairs and then falling. At the top, the gate or barrier needs to stop a crawling baby getting to the stairs. It is better not to place it directly across the top of the stairs for two reasons:
  - some gates have a bar across the bottom and this can be a tripping hazard. If the gate is at the top of the flight, a trip can lead to a fall down the stairs, which is much worse than simply falling over the bar
  - adults and older children sometimes climb over the barrier or gate rather than opening it. Again, this can lead to a fall down the stairs

It’s safer to put the gate or barrier across the landing or even across the baby’s bedroom door.

**Suffocation**

**By bedding** Very young babies have limited and involuntary movement and they can be suffocated by clothing, bedding or other material that they are not able to push away. Position him or her in the ‘feet to foot’ position so that he or she cannot wriggle down under the blankets. Soft padded bedclothes such as pillows and duvets are therefore unsuitable for children under a year old (by this age, children have sufficient movement to push bedding away from their face). There have also been cases of babies suffocating when left unattended on bean bag cushions and pillows outside the cot.

**Safety tips**

- Do not use duvets or pillows for children under the age of one year
- Put babies down to sleep on their backs
- Never leave a baby unattended on a cushion or bean bag.

**Other types of suffocation** Sadly, some babies have been accidentally suffocated by their parents or carers. This usually happens when a parent falls asleep while feeding or just holding a baby. The baby may then become trapped under the adult’s body and suffocate. We should emphasise that this is not a common occurrence and many parents and young babies sleep quite happily together in the same bed. However, parents who have been drinking or taking drugs (legal or otherwise), who are particularly tired, or who smoke, should let the baby sleep in its own cot.

Young babies who have been put down for a sleep on sofas or adult beds next to walls have suffocated when their heads become trapped in gaps between cushions or between the bed and the wall.

Cats, who instinctively head for warm places, have been known to curl up on top of babies, suffocating them. Young children sometimes regard tiny babies as dolls to be dressed or covered up, and this needs to be borne in mind.

**Safety tips**

- Do not sleep with or hold a baby if your health or judgement is impaired
- Avoid leaving babies to sleep on sofas or adult beds
- Use cat nets on prams and cots to deter cats
- Keep an eye on toddlers and young children around the baby.
Choking
Choking is related to suffocation in that it causes an obstruction to breathing. The most common form of choking, whatever the age, is from food or drink. Young babies have automatic sucking instincts, but will only start to learn how to deal with more solid food after a few months. A baby should never be left alone to feed from a propped-up bottle, as s/he may choke and be unable to push the bottle away.

There is also the possibility of older children trying to ‘feed’ the baby unsuitable foods such as sweets, peanuts and fruit.

Safety tips
- Always stay with a baby when bottle-feeding
- Keep an eye on older children and teach them not to put anything in the baby’s mouth
- Keep small objects away from a baby’s grasp.

Strangulation
By clothing Regulations have reduced the few risks associated with baby clothing. Ribbons and other ties, which in the past have been as long as the designer wanted them to be, are now restricted to a length which is not long enough to pose a strangulation threat. However, these regulations do not cover home-made clothes such as knitted hats and cardigans. If a long ribbon at the neck of a baby gets caught on the side of a cot, car seat or other item, there is a danger of strangulation. There is also a small danger from collars and necklines catching in a similar way. A related hazard is that of a baby’s fingers or toes catching in knitted or nylon clothing. The wool can wind around the digit, cutting off the blood supply, which can result in fingers or toes being amputated.

By other ribbons and jewellery Anything placed around the neck of a small baby is potentially hazardous. Necklaces, dummies on ribbons and other items hung around a baby’s neck should always be avoided.

Burns and scalds
Babies have extremely thin, delicate skin that is easily damaged. They can suffer severe burns and scalds at temperatures that may only sting an adult. Their immature body size also means that a small area of heat or a few drops of boiling water cause a proportionally larger amount of damage. Babies are also unable to move away from the source of heat, so whereas an adult will jump away from a spilt hot drink to avoid further injury, a baby will suffer the full effects.

From hot liquid It has become common practice for parents and carers to heat bottles of milk in microwaves. While this is quick and convenient, the milk is heated unevenly and there may be hot spots in the milk that can scald a baby’s mouth. Another potential hazard is if the parent or carer has a hot drink while feeding the baby. A jogged elbow, the baby suddenly flailing its arms, the cup slipping through fingers or someone – including pets – bumping into you could result in serious scalding. Liquid can remain hot enough to scald a baby for at least 15 minutes after boiling – long after it would hurt an adult’s skin.

This principle applies to bathing a baby as well. There are many bath thermometers available to buy these days, but the old-fashioned elbow in the water technique is just as effective. A good rule is to run the cold water first, then add the hot to bring it up to a comfortable temperature. The water should not feel either hot or cold.
From the sun Recent research has indicated that children who suffer sunburn are more prone to skin cancer in later life. Aside from this, the immediate effects of sunburn are unpleasant and potentially dangerous for young children. In the UK, we tend to under-estimate the strength of the sun and consequently do not take as many precautions as we should. We also forget that it is possible to get sunburn while in the shade. Babies and young children need much higher levels of skin protection than adults, and professionals advocate keeping children out of the sun altogether at certain times of the day.

Accidental burns from hot objects are not common in babies this young, as they have no real mobility to get near fires and other hazards.

It is, however, possible for hot things to be dropped on a baby by others – such as cigarettes or hot food – or for the baby itself to be dropped on a heat source.

Fires in the home Each year babies and children die in house fires, mostly as a result of smoke inhalation rather than actual burns. Young babies are incapable of escaping from a fire on their own, which makes them particularly vulnerable. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

Safety tips
- Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home and check the batteries every week. Alarms give vital extra seconds to escape a fire
- Extinguish cigarettes and matches completely
- Avoid using chip pans – a common cause of home fires
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of children’s reach
- Do not overload electric sockets and replace old or worn flexes
- Close interior doors to contain any fire
- Work out a family escape plan now – do not leave it until it is too late.

Drowning

In the bath Babies can drown in just a few centimetres of water, very quickly and with no noise or struggle. They do not have the knowledge or experience to recognise danger or try to reach the surface. Babies and young children need constant supervision while in water of any description. Bathing a tiny baby can be a daunting experience for a new parent, and bath time can be chaotic for an experienced parent trying to bath two older children and a newborn, but under no circumstances should a baby ever be left alone in water, even for a few seconds. Going to answer the phone or door bell, going to check on other children, getting nappies or clothes from another room – if it has to be done, then the baby should be taken too.

It is also important for parents to realise that toddlers should not be given the responsibility of looking after the baby in the bath. A two or three year old is still not old enough to recognise danger. One mother, bathing her three-year-old and her nine-month old baby, turned away from the bath to get towels from the cupboard. She turned back to find the baby had slipped under the water and the three-year-old playing impassively beside him.

Safety tips
- Avoid heating bottles in microwaves. Use a bottle warmer or jug of hot water. After warming, which ever method is used, shake the bottle thoroughly and test the temperature of the milk by placing a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel luke warm not hot
- Never have a hot drink while holding a baby
- Always check the water temperature with an elbow before putting a baby in the bath. The water should not feel either hot or cold. To avoid rapid and severe scalds, a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) should be fitted to the bath hot tap. If there is no TMV, always put cold water in the bath first, then add hot water.
- Dress young babies in close-knit, cotton clothing and hats that shade the face and back of the neck. Use special children’s sun-block cream
- Keep young babies out of the sun completely between 11.00am and 3.00pm when the sun is at its strongest.

Safety tips
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GUIDELINES FOR PRACTITIONERS
There are a number of bath seats now available in which to place babies in the bath. They are no substitute for adult supervision as they are not safety devices.

**Safety tips**
- Never leave a baby alone in the bath, even for a second
- Do not rely on older children to alert an adult to danger.

**Cuts and bruises**
As mentioned before, a young baby has very few chances of inflicting injury on himself. One of the few exceptions to this is if s/he is given something to hold. A young baby can grip quite strongly if an object is placed directly in its fist. What s/he cannot do is control the movements of that object. So there will be times when a baby manages to hit himself with a rattle, a toy or whatever else he is clutching. As long as the object is light or soft, no damage will be done, but heavier or pointed objects can inflict cuts or bruises.

There is also the chance that objects may be dropped on the baby – as a parent reaches across the cot or the pram, if the baby is lying in a car seat or bouncing chair in the kitchen etc.

**Safety tips**
- Make sure a baby is only given appropriate toys for his or her age
- Keep an eye on what older children are giving a baby to hold
- Avoid passing objects over a baby.

**Out and about**

**By car** It is essential that a baby is securely strapped into a correctly fitting infant carrier when travelling by car. A baby should be carried in a rear-facing seat for as long as possible, ideally for at least a year. This is because babies have proportionately large heads for their bodies and weak neck muscles that cannot support the head independently for the first few months of life. A rear-facing seat will support the head and neck in a crash, helping to prevent injury. It is now a legal requirement to properly restrain young children in cars. Babies must never be carried in a passenger’s arms.

Parents should get a car seat before the baby is born, so that from the very first trip home from the hospital, s/he is safely restrained. It is also very important to check that the car seat fits the car before buying, as some models fit some cars better than others.

**Safety tips**
- Always use a correctly fitting rear-facing baby seat when transporting a baby by car, even on the shortest journey – it’s the law
- Never put a rear-facing baby carrier in a seat with an airbag fitted.

**By pushchair/buggy** Most parents will use a pushchair for their baby at some stage in the first few months. Aside from ensuring that it is in good condition if it is old or second-hand, parents should also make sure that there is a five-point harness fitted and that they use the harness every time. This will prevent the baby falling out if the pushchair is pushed or knocked over.

**Safety tips**
- Check old or second-hand pushchairs/buggies for damage before using
- Always use the five-point harness to strap the baby in.

**In a baby sling** Baby slings, or carriers, are becoming increasingly popular. Most can be used when the baby is just a few days old and can be a very convenient way of carrying a small baby without having to use a pram. Babies seem to like them for the closeness they bring and the soothing motion of the parent’s walking and breathing. They should never be used in a car as a substitute for a baby car seat. The main hazard that faces parents using these slings is the possibility of injuring their baby if they trip over or fall down stairs.

**Safety tip**
- Always adjust and secure the sling’s straps correctly and take care when using stairs or over uneven ground.
Education

For the child

Young babies have absolutely no way of learning to keep themselves safe. It is entirely down to the adults who care for them to ensure their safety.

For parents

New parents have been likened to ‘sponges’ by marketing companies, because of their eagerness to absorb any information and advice about their new baby. We can take advantage of this by providing clear and accurate advice on keeping their baby safe at a time when parents are most receptive.

This could be in the form of:

- leaflets and hand-outs
- talks at parents groups
- one-to-one advice.

Most new parents will be inundated with information and advice, much of it coming from family and friends. Advice from grandparents can be very helpful. However, some of it can also be obsolete, especially on the issue of child safety. What may have been accepted practice a generation ago, such as travelling in a car without a restraint and putting babies down to sleep on their fronts, has now been proven to put babies at unnecessary risk of injury or death.

It is better not to devalue information from other sources, instead emphasising that your advice is based on the latest evidence.

The most important information that can be given is concerned with babies’ developmental stages: their skills, abilities and characteristics. If parents know what to expect from their baby, it helps them plan for the next stage, and have the necessary equipment ready.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of up-to-date publications which provide clear, concise safety advice for new parents. These include:

Keep your baby safe A one-stop guide to equipment, safety standards and keeping baby safe.

Babies A comprehensive list of tips to keep babies out of danger.

I’m only a baby but... A pictorial book on baby safety designed for all parents, but especially those with low literacy or with English as an additional language.

To order any of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: www.capt.org.uk or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.
### Rolling/crawling to walking

*on the move* (about 6 months to 15 months)

#### Facts and statistics

Every year:
- around 38,000 babies under a year old are taken to hospital after a fall
- around 17,000 babies aged one year and under go to hospital with burns and scalds

#### Abilities and characteristics

Babies of about six months and over are now starting to develop a measure of control over their bodies. They can make deliberate movements in order to reach something they want and become more dextrous in picking up small objects. They may start to crawl any day now, although it is well worth remembering that a significant number of babies do not crawl but will shuffle on their bottoms to reach what they want. They are more alert and aware of their surroundings and will start to explore their environment more actively now they have better movement.

**Babies between about six and fifteen months:**
- still have proportionately larger heads
- will put everything in their mouths – it is another way of feeling objects for them
- are still largely uncoordinated in their movements
- may still be wobbly when sitting unsupported – it takes time for the neck and back muscles to strengthen
- may climb or walk without going through a crawling stage
- may have started to cut teeth
- will be starting to eat more solid food
- do not have the ability to learn from experience.

**By eight months,** babies may be able to:
- crawl on all fours or shuffle on their bottoms
- pull themselves up and climb on to furniture
- use their hands to open and shut or to fill and empty objects
- chew on anything.

**By a year,** babies may be able to:
- stand unaided
- walk with or without assistance
- realise that things are still there even when put out of sight.

Babies of this age and stage are still completely dependent on adults for their safety, but are now starting to be capable of getting themselves into potentially dangerous situations.

### Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

#### Falls

**Down stairs** Once babies have started to move, the stairs become an especially dangerous place. Their natural instinct is to explore as far as they can get, but they have no concept of the consequence of their actions. A physical barrier is essential to keep them clear of steps and stairs. At this stage, there are also still many cases of parents and carers falling down stairs while holding a baby.

**Safety tips**
- Stairs should be kept clear of clutter
- Anyone carrying a baby or child up or down stairs should keep one hand free to hold on
- Before a baby starts to crawl or climb, a safety gate or barrier is needed at the bottom of the stairs to stop him or her starting to climb the stairs and then falling. At the top, the gate or barrier needs to stop a crawling baby getting to the stairs. It is better not to place it directly across the top of the stairs for two reasons:
  - some gates have a bar across the bottom and this can be a tripping hazard. If the gate is at the top of the flight, a trip can lead to a fall down the stairs, which is much worse than simply falling over the bar
  - adults and older children sometimes climb over the barrier or gate rather than opening it. Again, this can lead to a fall down the stairs
- It’s safer to put the gate or barrier across the landing or even across the baby’s bedroom door. This can help restrict access to the bathroom where there are other hazards, such as cleaning fluids and very hot water.

**From raised surfaces** Once a baby has started to move independently, it is even more dangerous to place him or her on a raised surface, for whatever reason. Their movements can be sudden and swift and cause them to fall. Even falls from low levels – off sofas or beds – can cause broken bones and
other injuries. A baby who has started to crawl may well also start to try to climb up on furniture, creating the potential for falls.

### Safety tips
- Babies should never be left unattended while on a raised surface
- Nappy changing is safest done on the floor
- Baby car seats and bouncing chairs should always be placed on the floor
- Be aware that babies might climb on furniture.

### From highchairs
Babies start to use highchairs once they are sitting upright more confidently. They will quickly grow more confident in their highchairs and many babies will try to climb out or reach for things beyond their grasp. This latter could result in the highchair over-balancing. Using a five-point harness will keep a baby in the highchair, but adult supervision is still essential at all times.

### Safety tip
- Always use a five-point harness every time the baby sits in a highchair.

### From cots
Newly mobile babies may try to climb out of their cots, using toys to stand on or any other footholds s/he can find.

### Safety tip
- Once a baby can sit up, remove large cot toys and keep the drop side in the ‘up’ position.

### Suffocation

#### By bedding
Although the danger of suffocation by bedding reduces as a baby grows, it is still a possibility. An active baby may twist their bedding and entrap themselves in the folds. Once a baby has independent movement, putting them to sleep on their backs is no longer necessary, as they are able to roll or twist out of one position into another.

### Safety tip
- Do not use duvets or pillows for children under the age of one year.

### Other types of suffocation
Plastic bags are potentially a source of great danger. As a baby plays and explores, anything s/he comes across will be seen as a toy, including plastic bags. Despite air holes in most carrier bags, there is a real danger of suffocation.

It is still not wise to sleep with a baby if you have been drinking or are under the influence of drugs, are particularly tired or smoke (see page 6).

### Safety tips
- Keep plastic bags out of reach and tie a knot in them
- Do not sleep with or hold a baby if your health or judgement is impaired
- Keep an eye on toddlers and young children around the baby.

### Choking
Weaning usually takes place at around three or four months, when more solid food is introduced to the baby’s diet. At first, this will be pureed into almost liquid form, but gradually more challenging food is introduced. Pieces of food are one of the most common items to cause choking in both adults and children. A baby has to learn the complex process of chewing and swallowing solid food and will be prone to choking during the learning process. Once a baby has learned to pick up items, his instinct will be to put them straight in his mouth. A baby uses his/her mouth to feel new things, in the same way an older child or adult feels things with their hands. Anything smaller than the diameter of a two pence piece – roughly the size of a child’s windpipe – can cause choking if swallowed, so everyday items like coins, boiled sweets, buttons, small parts of toys and beads should not be left where a baby can reach them. It is worth remembering that choking can be completely silent, with no sound to warn that something is wrong. An additional hazard can be toys belonging to older children – they have smaller parts on which a young baby could choke.

### Safety tips
- Always stay with a baby when eating or drinking
- Keep small items out of the baby’s reach
- Watch older children and teach them not to put anything in the baby’s mouth or give him small objects or toys.
Poisoning

Babies from about six months onwards begin to put things in their mouth which can lead to them swallowing something harmful such as medicine tablets or cleaning fluid.

Safety tips

- All medicines should be locked away or kept high up and out of reach and sight
- Cleaning products should be kept high up out of reach and sight or, if necessary, safety catches should be fitted to low cupboard doors where they are kept. When buying cleaning fluids, those containing a bittering agent (that makes the product taste nasty) should be sought
- Bottle tops and lids should always be firmly closed when not in use
- Carbon monoxide alarms should be fitted wherever there is a flame burning appliance (such as a gas boiler) or open fire. Appliances should be serviced regularly.

Strangulation

By clothing As pointed out before, it is possible but rare for a child to be strangled by her clothing. One example is if a child is climbing on something, slips and the neckline of their clothes catches, leaving them suspended above the floor. Parents should avoid coats or tops with drawstring fastenings.

By other ribbons and jewellery In the same way, anything fastened around the neck can catch and cause strangulation. Babies and toddlers should not wear necklaces and ribbons around the neck.

By other means Once a baby is on the move, whether crawling, shuffling or walking, there are a number of unexpected hazards. In recent years, there have been cases of babies becoming entangled in adult clothing like bras or the dangling straps of a highchair. Window blind cords, belts and rotary washing lines can also be dangerous.

Burns and scalds

Once a baby is mobile, the opportunities for suffering scalds and burns increase. S/he can now get to things that were previously out of reach like hot drinks left on low surfaces, radiators, heaters, ovens and fireplaces. Their skin remains very thin and susceptible to burns.

From hot liquid A baby’s mouth is as sensitive as its skin, so hot drinks will scald. A new danger arises from the baby’s new mobility – reaching up and pulling on dangling kettle flexes or saucepan handles. They may also start to imitate adults by drinking from cups, so hot drinks need to be put out of reach.

If using a highchair in the kitchen, don’t place it where the baby can reach the cooker, kettle or hot drinks.
### Safety tips
- Avoid heating bottles in microwaves. Use a bottle warmer or jug of hot water. After warming, which ever method is used, shake the bottle thoroughly and test the temperature of the milk by placing a few drops on the inside of your wrist. It should feel luke warm not hot.
- Never have a hot drink while holding a baby.
- Keep hot drinks well out of babies’ reach.
- Always check the water temperature with an elbow before putting a baby in the bath. The water should not feel either hot or cold. To avoid rapid and severe scalds, a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) should be fitted to the bath hot tap. If there is no TMV, always put cold water in the bath first, then add hot water.
- Always use a kettle with a short lead or curled flex.
- Consider using a safety gate to bar access to the kitchen when hot food and liquids are around or use a playpen if there’s room.

### From the sun
With increased mobility, it is harder to keep babies in the shade. Sun cream and cotton clothing are essential.

### Safety tips
- Dress babies in close-knit, cotton clothing and hats covering the back of the neck and the face and use children’s sun-block cream.
- Keep babies out of the sun completely between 11.00am and 3.00pm when the sun is at its strongest.

### From hot objects
Once a baby is rolling, shuffling or crawling, s/he will want to explore the environment. This may include touching things like radiators and fireplaces. It is important to remember that babies do not learn from experience at this stage, so parents should not expect a baby to ‘remember’ not to touch the hot radiator.

### Safety tips
- Fit fireguards to all fires and heaters. Fit a sparkguard if you have a coal or wood fire.
- Leave irons to cool out of reach and avoid ironing when a baby is there.

### Fires in the home
Once a baby is in any way mobile, it is time for matches and cigarette lighters to be put out of reach. Even a six or seven month old baby may, through luck not judgement, manage to strike a match or ignite a lighter. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

### Safety tips
- Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home and test the batteries every week. Alarms give vital extra seconds to escape a fire.
- Extinguish cigarettes and matches completely.
- Avoid using chip pans – a common cause of home fires.
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of children’s reach.
- Do not overload electrical sockets and replace old or worn flexes.
- Close interior doors to contain any fire.
- Work out a family escape plan now – do not leave it until it is too late.

### Drowning
Once underwater, babies have no particular instinct to scrabble to the surface for air. By this stage, most children will enjoy playing in or with water and have no reason or knowledge to fear it. They may have started to use paddling pools, so the dangers of drowning increase. Although increasingly rare in this country, nappy buckets – where terry nappies are left to soak in water – have been the cause of a number of drownings in the US and Australia. A baby may pull himself up to peer inside and topple over into the water – and babies of this age do not have the physical skills to get out safely. Even small amounts of water, such as rainwater collected in a paddling pool or upturned dustbin lid, can prove lethal.

### Safety tips
- Never leave a baby alone in the bath, even for a second.
- Do not rely on older children to alert an adult to danger.
- Supervise all water play closely.
- Always empty paddling pools, buckets, watering cans etc. immediately after use.
**Cuts and bruises**

A baby’s first independent movements are characterised by unsteadiness and poor co-ordination. As they learn to roll and crawl, babies will bump into anything and everything, leading to more accident potential. Their increased mobility may also mean they grab for items left lying around on tables etc.

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**By car** Once a baby becomes more active, it is even more important to strap them into their pram or pushchair using a five point harness. They may well start to lean out to reach for objects or try to ‘escape’.

**Safety tips**

- Check old or second-hand prams and pushchairs for damage before using
- Always use the five-point harness to strap a baby in.

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**Out and about**

**By car** Once a baby can sit unaided for long periods of time – i.e. his neck has strengthened sufficiently to support his head – he can be moved to a forward-facing car seat. However, expert opinion is that it is best to keep babies in the rear-facing infant carrier for as long as possible, as this is the safer way to travel.

Although it usually happens when babies are a little older, it is possible that a baby might start to try to wriggle out of her harness or fiddle with the harness release button. This is all part of their exploring their environment, but clearly has safety implications. More on this in the next section.

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**Baby walkers – a warning**

This is the most popular age for parents to put their babies in baby walkers - in some cases because they think they help babies learn to walk. This is not the case. Rolling, sitting, crawling and playing on the floor are all important stages in developing strength before learning to walk. From a safety point of view, walkers can allow babies to reach things they could not before. They are associated with more injuries than any other single item of baby equipment – especially falls down stairs – and burns, the most severe of which arise when the baby walker collides with a fireplace or because the baby can reach, for example, a hot mug of drink.

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**Safety tips**

- Only use a baby walker that complies with the latest standard BS EN 1273:2005 (while it is too early to say whether or not this standard has reduced the numbers of accidents that babies have in walkers, we know that baby walkers complying with older standards allowed babies to move quickly and get into trouble)
- Don’t use a baby walker in the kitchen because it can allow babies to reach higher than normal so that they can grab at dangling flexes and tablecloths, and touch a hot oven door
- Use a safety gate at the top of stairs and steps to stop the walker falling down
- Ensure that you have a fireguard to stop the walker getting close to any fire
- Keep the baby walker well away from garden ponds.

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**Safety tips**

- Always use a correctly fitting safety seat when transporting a baby by car, even on the shortest journey
- Only move the baby to a forward-facing seat when s/he can sit unaided for long periods of time, not before
- Discourage babies from fiddling or touching the release button on their harness by fitting a play tray or distracting with toys.

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**Safety tips**

- Keep an eye on what older children are giving the baby to hold
- Move dangerous objects like knives, scissors and other heavy or sharp items out of reach
- Position furniture with hard or sharp edges so that there is less chance of the baby hurting herself.
Education

For the child

Babies at this stage will still have no way of learning to keep themselves safe. It is entirely down to the adults who care for them to ensure their safety. Parents and carers can start to set a good example in their own practices and reinforce simple safety messages and statements to get in the habit, but do not expect the baby to understand or remember them.

For parents

The principle of staying one step ahead as a baby grows is a very important one. Parents and carers need to be informed about what the next likely stages are in their baby’s development and what they should be doing to prepare for them.

This could be done in the form of:

- leaflets and hand-outs
- talks at clinics and baby and toddler groups
- one-to-one advice.

Most parents will be receiving help and advice from family and friends. Aim to supplement this with information on development and safety in the home, out and about and in the car.

Parents need to understand that a child of this age will not remember or learn from experience. Careful supervision and avoidance of dangerous situations and items are the best ways to prevent accidental injury.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of publications and resources to support your work with parents. For this development stage, they include four leaflets:

- Keep hot drinks out of my reach
- Put small things where I can’t choke on them
- What might poison your child?

Also:

Now I can crawl, I can... A pictorial book on baby safety designed for all parents, but especially those with low literacy or with English as an additional language.

To order any of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: www.capt.org.uk or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.
Facts and statistics

Every year:
- around 200,000 children aged one to three years old attend hospital after a fall
- around 22,000 children aged one to three years old attend hospital after suspected poisoning.

Abilities and characteristics

Toddlers are inquisitive little people with enormous amounts of energy coupled with very little understanding of the consequences of their actions. Most parents’ nerves will suffer during the toddling period due to their child’s seemingly limitless ability to put him or herself in alarming situations.

Toddlers have:
- thin skin
- bones that are still developing
- improving speech
- improving ability to manipulate objects like screw tops and door handles
- a short attention span
- difficulty in telling from which direction a sound comes
- limited powers of concentration.

By fourteen months, toddlers may be able to:
- walk without help
- crawl upstairs
- operate knobs, switches and dials.

By two years, toddlers may:
- operate taps and unscrew tops
- be interested in the smell, taste and texture of objects
- start imitating adult behaviour
- be able to repeat simple instructions but will not necessarily understand or obey them.

Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

Falls

Toddlers are forever tripping and falling as they play, resulting in grazed knees and scuffed elbows. This is absolutely natural and not something we need to particularly address. They are learning the boundaries of their ability, which is a crucial part of development. However, it is important to minimise the risk of serious injury by recognising what poses an unacceptable threat to a toddler’s safety.

Down stairs

Falls down stairs are still one of the most common accidents to befall toddlers. Their new-found ability to climb will mean that stairs are particularly attractive. Safety gates themselves can now become a problem, if a toddler tries to climb them or works out how to open them.

Safety tips

- Before the baby starts to crawl or climb, a safety gate or barrier is needed at the bottom of the stairs to stop him or her starting to climb the stairs and then falling. At the top, the gate or barrier needs to stop the toddler getting to the stairs. It is better not to place it directly across the top of the stairs for two reasons:
  - some gates have a bar across the bottom and this can be a tripping hazard. If the gate is at the top of the flight, a trip can lead to a fall down the stairs, which is much worse than simply falling over the bar
  - adults and older children sometimes climb over the barrier or gate rather than opening it. Again, this can lead to a fall down the stairs

  It’s safer to put the gate or barrier across the landing or even across the toddler’s bedroom door. This can help restrict access to the bathroom where there are other hazards, such as cleaning fluids and very hot water.

- Begin teaching toddlers how to climb stairs but never let them go up or down on their own.

From windows

Many toddlers are injured each year after falling from a window. Even from a low, ground floor window, if it is above concrete or stone, the injuries can still be severe. A toddler’s more dextrous fingers can now learn to operate window catches and s/he can squeeze through surprisingly small gaps.
Suffocation
Toddlers can easily free themselves from bedding, so parents can start using pillows and duvets once their child is over a year old. The main risk of suffocation now comes from playing and exploring, so potentially hazardous objects should be recognised and kept out of reach. It is also important to remember that toddlers should not be allowed to play with or keep things in plastic bags, even under adult supervision, as they will then assume that it is OK to play with any bag that they find.

Safety tips
- Avoid putting furniture like beds, chairs and tables underneath windows. They can be climbed on to reach the window.

Poisoning
It is at around the toddling age that accidental poisoning becomes a particular danger. A young child will try eating or drinking anything, even something that tastes or smells unpleasant. Any chemicals or medicines – including vitamin tablets and contraceptive pills – should be kept at least five feet off the floor and preferably locked away. Toddlers can demonstrate amazing determination and climbing ability in their bid to reach something, so parents need to be on their guard. One toddler used the open door of the washing machine to climb on the work surface and then managed to open a cupboard door fitted with a child-resistant catch, all to get at what he thought were sweets but were in fact pills.

N.B. Child-resistant lids and catches are exactly that – child-resistant, not child-proof. Although generally speaking, children are older before they learn how to open these catches and lids, some toddlers have managed to work them out or use brute force.

Safety tips
- Keep medicines and chemicals locked away or high up out of reach and sight
- Keep chemicals in their original containers, to avoid confusion
- Do not keep medication in handbags or by the bed
- Check the garden for poisonous plants
- Carbon monoxide alarms should be fitted wherever there is a flame burning appliance (such as a gas boiler) or open fire. Appliances should be serviced regularly.

Choking
Food is still the main culprit when toddlers choke. Reconstituted meat, like hot dogs and burgers is one of the main dangers, along with hard sweets and nuts. Toddlers are still learning about chewing and swallowing, so they need to concentrate on eating. Children of this age are still prone to putting everything in their mouths so coins, buttons, bits of toys and other small objects still pose a threat.

A by-product of toddlers’ fascination with putting things in their mouth is their pushing small objects up their nose or in their ears. It is an entirely natural action for a child of that age, but needs to be discouraged as it can cause injury.

Safety tips
- Always supervise young children when they are eating
- Sit with toddlers and make them sit still while they eat, even biscuits
- Keep small objects out of reach
- Do not give toddlers peanuts or boiled sweets – peanuts contain aracous oil which can cause the bronchial tubes to swell and close off air in-take if inhaled.

Strangulation
A toddler’s head is still proportionately larger to his body than that of an older child or adult. This means that toddlers are vulnerable if they try to squeeze through a small gap – their heads may well get stuck. This is particularly dangerous if it is off the ground, potentially leaving the toddler hanging by his head. Most modern play equipment is made with gaps large enough to pass through without incident, but it is a point worth remembering.
Burns and scalds

Toddlers are still vague about the concept of hot and cold. They can start to be taught not to touch certain items, but they will not necessarily remember or understand why. If matches or lighters are left in reach, they may well work out how to operate them without understanding the dangers. Their curiosity or desire to copy adults may lead them into danger – tugging at pan handles or electric flexes, trying to use a hot iron or hair straighteners left to cool on the floor, lighting matches, playing with the bath hot tap. Their skin is still thin and liable to burn and scald more easily and seriously than an adult’s.

Safety tips

- Supervise climbing games
- Be aware of necklines catching in play equipment
- Keep harness straps, cords and other hanging loops tucked out of the way.

Fires in the home

Each year babies and children die in house fires, mostly as a result of smoke inhalation rather than actual burns. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

Safety tips

- Always check the water temperature with an elbow before putting a toddler in the bath. The water should not feel either hot or cold. To avoid rapid and severe scalds, a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) should be fitted to the bath hot tap. If there is no TMV, always put cold water in the bath first, then add hot water
- Keep irons and hair straighteners out of reach and avoid ironing with a toddler around
- Always use a kettle with a short or curled flex
- Use the back rings on the cooker and turn handles to the rear
- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and high up
- Use sun block, a hat and loose clothing on warmer days.

Electrical burns

Electrical burns and shocks are not very common. Generally, they happen because of faulty electrical equipment such as frayed wires or exposed plugs. It is very difficult for toddlers to get an electric shock by playing with a socket. You do not need socket covers to make them safe as they are designed to be safe. Socket covers may stop young children plugging in appliances that can cause nasty burns, or even start a fire, but they should not be relied upon to prevent electric shocks as they are not regulated. It is better to make sure the appliances are safely put away.

Safety tips

- Check appliances and wiring are in good working order
- Avoid children plugging in appliances that could burn them or start a fire, by making sure appliances are put safely away.

Drowning

Being mobile, toddlers can reach potentially hazardous places on their own, unlike younger babies. Bathwater is a key hazard and leads to a several drownings every year. As well as during bath time where a toddler has been left unsupervised, baths with water in can lead to drownings (and scaldings) if toys are dropped in and toddlers try to retrieve them. Garden ponds, often those in neighbouring gardens or belonging to friends or relatives, are also
responsible for a number of drownings and near-drownings every year. Even small amounts of water, like puddles and rain water gathered in dustbin lids or paddling pools can be enough to cause a fatal accident. Indoors as well, water left in the bath or in buckets and other containers has proved fatal.

While toddlers should be encouraged to enjoy water play and ‘swimming’ in pools with parents, there is a danger of their becoming over-confident and having no fear of water.

### Safety tips
- Closely supervise toddlers in paddling pools or playing near water
- Empty baths, paddling pools and buckets immediately after use
- Fence off or fill in the garden pond and check that boundaries are secure if there is a pond next door
- Put covers on water butts
- Stay with toddlers in the bath.

### Cuts and bruises
The odd minor bump or bruise is an occupational hazard of being a toddler. However, door jambs present a very painful danger to inquisitive little hands – fingers can be lost in this type of accident. Cuts are potentially serious and parents should take steps to prevent them. Toddlers who see adults cutting paper or vegetables, or shaving may try to imitate them if they get hold of scissors, a knife or a razor.

Serious cuts can also result from toddlers running into low glass, such as patio windows and glass panelled doors.

### Safety tips
- Keep scissors, knives and razors out of the reach of toddlers
- Replace low glass with safety glass, board it up or cover with safety film
- Be aware of little fingers near door jambs – consider using foam door stops from larger child specialist shops or department and DIY stores. Remember to close doors at night in case of fire.

### Out and about

#### By car
Toddlers can safely travel forward-facing in a seat suitable for their weight and developmental stage. It is usually around this time that many children start to try ‘escaping’ from their car seat, whether by wriggling out of the straps or pressing the harness release button. They are not deliberately being naughty – they are just exploring and experimenting. However, it poses a serious risk to the child and unfortunately there is not a real solution. Try fitting a play tray or talking about other things to distract them or tightening straps.

Leaving a toddler in the car on his own can be dangerous. Even strapped in, he may fiddle with window or door controls and an unrestrained toddler could burn himself on the cigarette lighter, get a limb or his neck caught in an electric window, knock the hand brake off or suffer from the heat in summer.

### Safety tips
- Always use a correctly fitting forward-facing child car seat when transporting a toddler, even on the shortest journey
- Do not leave toddlers unattended in cars
- Encourage toddlers not to touch or fiddle with their harnesses.

#### On foot
Toddlers are unpredictable and quick. They can run off and be out of sight in second. This can put them in dangerous situations. When out on the street, an exciting place for toddlers, all the distractions may mean that they wander off into trouble. Cars are responsible for more accidental childhood deaths than any other single cause, and while a toddler might recognise a car, s/he will not have the first idea of the dangers that come with them.

### Safety tips
- Use a harness and reins when toddlers are walking on the road
- Walk with the child on the inside and the adult kerb-side – do not forget to swap when a road is crossed
- Fasten the five point harness in the pushchair every time
- Set a good example when crossing the road by choosing a safe place and talk to your child about what you’re doing
- Make sure the garden gate is secure so the toddler can’t run into the road.
Other safety points

Toddlers are very selfish little people. It is not malicious selfishness; they are simply unable to grasp that anyone has any rights or feelings other than themselves. As far as they are concerned, they are the centre of the universe and everything is there just for them. They also love to copy the adults around them and have no concept of their actions having consequences. This means that they may inflict harm on other children without understanding the outcome of their actions. If there is a new baby in the home, toddlers should be supervised around him or her. There have been cases of toddlers feeding sweets and peanuts to new-born babies or trying to give them a bath on their own. One toddler even put his new baby sister in the washing machine because her nappy was dirty. Many toddlers will poke and prod younger children quite hard without realising they are hurting.

Education

For the child

A toddler has an ever increasing vocabulary and can understand simple instructions. However, toddlers are still not old enough to understand the concept of ‘danger’ and what it means to them, so prevention and supervision are still the watchwords. Toddlers are keen to learn and copy everything, so parents and carers can capitalise on this by setting good examples with their own actions and by repeating simple safety messages like ‘Hold on tight when you climb the stairs’ or ‘Don’t touch the hot radiator’. However, repeating is not remembering – reliable memory takes years to develop – so supervision is still necessary.

Simple safety games can also be played, such as showing a toddler some pictures of things like ice creams, fires, matches and fridges and asking them what’s hot and what’s cold. Keep things simple and do not expect a toddler to remember.

- set a good example and talk about what you are doing
- play safety games
- keep things simple.

For parents

While it is only natural for parents to think that their toddler is the brightest, most advanced child around, it is vital they do not over-estimate their child’s abilities. While children of this age will parrot words and phrases they are taught, it does not automatically follow that they either understand what it means or will remember it when necessary. Parents also need to understand that children of this age still do not really learn by experience, so just because a toddler has hurt his fingers by touching a hot radiator it does not mean he will not do exactly the same thing tomorrow and the day after.

In many cases, the best injury prevention technique at this age is to simply separate the toddler from the hazard by a physical barrier – e.g. a fire guard, a closed door or a locked cupboard. Tearful frustration at not being able to get at what they want is better than painful experience.

Parents should concentrate on setting a good safety example to their toddler, praising appropriate behaviour like holding on when going up or down steps and gently correcting unsafe behaviour like putting fingers near door jambs.

- do not over-estimate a child’s ability
- toddlers do not always learn from experience
- praise good safety behaviour.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of publications that provide clear, simple advice to parents of toddlers. These include the following leaflets:

- How safe is your child from a serious fall?
- How safe is your child from burns and scalds?
- How safe is your child in the car?
- How safe are your child’s toys?
- Make sure my fingers don’t get trapped

Also:
- Toddlers and up A comprehensive list of tips to keep toddlers safe

How safe is your child at home? A room by room guide to making the home safe for under 5s.

To order any of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: www.capt.org.uk or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.
Children aged about 3 to 5
learning about safety

Facts and statistics
- In 2005, 529 children aged one to four years old were injured in fires in the UK and 13 died.
- In 2006, there were 3,010 road accident casualties of children aged three to five years in Great Britain, with 16 deaths. Of these, 42% were injured as pedestrians and 47% as car passengers.

Abilities and characteristics
Children of this age group will have improving physical co-ordination and dexterity along with increasing understanding of action and consequence. They are likely to forget safety instructions when distracted, excited, tired or upset, but have better memories and powers of concentration. However, the reasons for safety rules will still largely be a mystery to them.

They will enjoy testing their own abilities and setting themselves challenges. Exploration and experimentation are still major parts of their play, along with role playing, like being doctors or teachers. They use imaginative play and love pretending to be any number of things – animals, super heroes, adults around them, cartoon characters etc. They will find ways to use toys and other everyday objects the designer, manufacturer and parent never intended or imagined.

Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

Falls

**From windows** At this age, children can have powerful imaginations and unrealistic expectations. They see Superman on the TV fly out of a window and imagine that, given the right costume, they could do it too. A physical barrier to their doing this is the best prevention.

**Safety tips**
- Fit locks or safety catches to stop windows from opening more than 6.5 cm (2.5”) to all windows that a child could reach by climbing
- Avoid putting furniture like beds underneath windows
- Tell children about the danger of playing with or near windows.

**From play equipment** Modern play equipment is generally made to a relevant British Standard, which means it will have certain safety features like safely spaced bars or securely fastened fittings. But however safe the equipment is, if a small child falls from the top of a climbing frame, injury is the likely consequence. It is impossible and undesirable to remove every element of risk from play because it is important that play is challenging and interesting. However by ensuring that children only use appropriate play equipment, preferably over impact-absorbing surfaces and under supervision, some of the more serious risk is removed.

Although not play equipment, bunk beds are often used in children’s play. They’re not really suitable for children aged under six, who could suffer a serious fall from the top bunk.

**Safety tips**
- Select play equipment suitable for your child’s age and development
- Choose playgrounds that have impact-absorbing surfaces fitted
- Discourage playing on bunk beds
- Show children how to use equipment correctly, but expect them to use it in unexpected ways!

**Suffocation**

Plastic bags still pose the greatest threat of suffocation to children of this age, although it is fairly rare. Avoid storing toys in plastic bags and do not give them to children to keep things in.

**Safety tips**
- Teach children to hold on to the bannisters when going up or down stairs
- The stairs and landing should never be used as a play area
- Encourage children not to leave toys etc. on the stairs.

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Although not play equipment, bunk beds are often used in children’s play. They’re not really suitable for children aged under six, who could suffer a serious fall from the top bunk.

**Suffocation**

Plastic bags still pose the greatest threat of suffocation to children of this age, although it is fairly rare. Avoid storing toys in plastic bags and do not give them to children to keep things in.
**Choking**

Generally speaking, by the age of three, most children have grown out of the habit of putting everything in their mouths. However, parents know their children best and should continue to avoid toys with small parts if the habit persists. A greater danger comes from choking on food, which can be tackled by children sitting still to eat and having an adult presence to supervise. Small solid food items such as some types of sweets and ice cubes can present a hazard, so avoid if at all possible.

**Poisoning**

Despite increasing knowledge of what is and is not edible, children of five and under are still the most susceptible age group to accidental poisoning. They may be easily confused by medicines that look like sweets and poisonous berries which resemble red currants and blackberries. Children will also have much improved ‘breaking and entering’ techniques with which to get to what they want. Parents may find it safest to keep all harmful items – including vitamins, contraceptive pills, alcohol and cigarettes – in one well-used room where children are unlikely to be unsupervised for very long.

**N.B.** By this age, most children will be able to open child-resistant tops on medicines and chemicals, so these alone will not prevent accidental poisoning.

**Safety tips**

- Keep medicines and chemicals locked away or high up out of reach and sight.
- Do not keep medication in handbags
- Teach children not to eat anything they pick outdoors until they have checked with an adult.

**Strangulation**

There is still a small risk of strangulation to children of this age from their clothing, mostly when it gets caught in or around another object, like play equipment or railings. Other dangers may be washing lines, particularly rotary lines, blind cords and elastics.

**Burns and scalds**

Children of this age are keen to help or copy the adults around them. This can be hazardous when it comes to handling hot food and liquids, using the oven, lighting candles, running hot taps etc. By now most children will understand the concept of ‘hot, do not touch’, but this is easily forgotten at any time. Parents and carers will need to use their own judgement as to what their child is capable of, but generally speaking, the under fives are safest doing jobs that do not involve hot objects or liquids. Their improved manual dexterity means that children of this age can turn on taps, operate oven controls and switch on heaters. Parents need to be aware of this and take appropriate action.

**Safety tips**

- Always check the water temperature before putting a young child in the bath. Fit a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) to the bath hot tap to prevent rapid and severe scalding if a toddler manages to turn on the hot tap.
- Keep irons and hair straighteners out of reach
- Always use a kettle with a short or curled flex
- Use the back rings on the cooker and turn handles to the rear
- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and high up
- Use sun block, a hat and loose clothing on sunny days.
Fires in the home

Each year children die in house fires, mostly as a result of smoke inhalation rather than actual burns. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

Safety tips
- Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home and test the batteries every week. Alarms give vital extra seconds to escape a fire.
- Extinguish cigarettes and matches completely.
- Avoid using chip pans – a common cause of home fires.
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of children’s reach.
- Do not overload electric sockets and replace old or worn flexes.
- Teach children what to do if they discover a fire or hear the smoke alarm going off.
- Close interior doors to contain any fire.
- Work out a family escape plan now – do not leave it until it is too late.

Drowning

Although the risk of drowning in the bath or in small amounts of water is lesser, children in this age group are still vulnerable in and near water. They may be more confident in the water, but there are still many risks. The garden pond remains a threat, as does playing near open water like streams, canals and reservoirs, even under supervision. Once children are about four, it is generally OK to leave them in the bath, as long as they cannot lock the door and an adult is in ear-shot.

Safety tips
- Closely supervise children in paddling pools or playing near water.
- Fence off or fill in the garden pond.
- The safest place for swimming is a public swimming pool.

Cuts

This age group can start to be taught how to use some knives and scissors safely, such as using a round-ended knife to butter bread or using children’s scissors in craft activities. Their manual dexterity has improved since they were toddlers, and teaching them to use knives and scissors correctly early on will help establish good practice. Any sharp object, including razors and nail files, should still be stored out of children’s reach. Even plastic knives can be sharp, if they snap. Low glass still poses a threat as boisterous play can result in children falling against doors and windows.

Safety tips
- Store knives and scissors safely and teach children the correct way to use them and put them away.
- Replace low glass with safety glass, board it up or cover with safety film.

Out and about

By car

By the age of four, most children will be able to use a booster seat or cushion in the car. Their bodies have matured sufficiently for them to be restrained just with an adult seat belt fitted around an appropriate booster seat or cushion. It is still important to not leave children unattended in cars, as their improving physical skills combined with curiosity and imagination can lead to accidents.

Safety tips
- Always use a correctly fitting booster seat or cushion when transporting a child, even on the shortest journey.
- Do not leave young children unattended in cars.

On foot

The Department for Transport (DfT) recommends that children aged under five are always accompanied by an adult on the road. They simply do not have the understanding or experience to deal with traffic. Parents should talk to their children about how to cross the road safely and set a good example, but never expect them to really understand and remember.

Safety tips
- Never allow a child under five out alone.
- Encourage children to hold your hand when out.
- Set a good example when crossing the road.

On bicycles

Many children will have started riding...
tricycles or even bicycles by the age of five. A child this young should never be allowed on the road on their bike or trike for the same reasons that they cannot yet cross a road alone. All cyclists, regardless of age, should wear correctly fitting helmets, so parents have the opportunity to establish the habit very young.

### Safety tips
- All cyclists should wear correctly fitting cycle helmets
- Do not allow children in this age group to ride on the roads.

### Education

#### For the child

As a child grows out of ‘toddler-hood’, their capacity for learning is still enormous. Now is the time to start explaining why some things are dangerous, as opposed to simply saying ‘don’t touch’ or ‘don’t go in there’. This will make the child feel ‘grown up’ and more likely to respond positively. However, there are still many limits to their understanding and abilities, so information needs to be tailored to their level and repeatedly reinforced.

Learning safety rules will help with memory development and can still be fun for the child, but parents and carers should still not over-estimate a child’s ability to remember. Adult help and guidance is still essential during this period, while the child gains confidence and good habits are starting to be established.

As they pass out of the self-obsessed toddler period, children can also start to understand that their actions have an effect on others around them. They are still too young to take responsibility for others, but can be taught that others might be hurt because of the things they do, such as leaving toys on the stairs or giving small objects to a baby.

- set a good example
- explain why some things or actions are dangerous
- make learning about safety a fun and positive experience
- teach children that their behaviour and actions affect other people.

#### For parents

It can be difficult for parents to remember that just because their child is now walking, talking and generally acting much more like a child than a toddler or baby, they are not necessarily ready for more responsibility. A four year old is still an impulsive, forgetful and physically and emotionally immature little person. While undoubtedly they will be learning more and more every day, they are still in need of an adult’s guidance and supervision.

On the other hand, parents and carers also need to realise that children in this age group can start to be taught some basic safety techniques and how to apply them. It is very much down to the parent to be the judge of their own child’s abilities and understanding, but there is merit in teaching children the safe way to deal with simple tasks such as using a knife to butter bread or cut up a piece of fruit. Supervision is still all-important, but so is allowing the child the actual experience where it is safe and appropriate.

Praising good safety behaviour rather than only picking on ‘bad’ behaviour is a positive move that will also increase a child’s confidence and highlight for them what they’re doing right. Children of this age are eager to learn and keen to please those they look up to, so it is important to be positive about what they do and use this time to give them as much information and guidance as is appropriate.

- do not over-estimate a child’s ability
- teach children how to cope with some hazardous situations
- praise good safety behaviour
- supervision is still the best accident prevention technique.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of publications that provide clear, simple advice to parents of pre-school age children. These include the following leaflets:

- How safe is your child in the garden?
- How safe is your child from burns and scalds?
- What might poison your child?
- How safe are your child’s toys?

Also:

*It’s fun to go out, but..* A comprehensive list of tips to keep toddlers safe

How safe is your child at home? A room by room guide to making the home safe for under 5s.

To order any of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk) or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.
Facts and statistics

Every year:

- around 150,000 children aged five to seven years old attend hospital after falls
- over 13,000 children in this age group go to hospital to get cuts treated
- over 400 children aged five to seven years old attend hospital after a choking incident.

Abilities and characteristics

As full-time schooling starts, children in this age group are coping with a lot more in their everyday lives. They may feel more grown-up as they deal with the challenges of being away from their family and home for a large part of the day. There will be many more outside influences on their behaviour and outlook and they may start to get mixed messages about safety – “But so-and-so’s mum lets him do that!”

Play is still a very important part of their lives, as is challenging themselves and testing their physical abilities. This is the age when they might start to join clubs and organisations that might teach them more about safety and other life skills.

While their risk assessment skills are improving and increasing, children of this age are still impulsive, occasionally thoughtless, liable to over-estimate their abilities and in need of adult guidance.

Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

Falls

**Down stairs** The stairs are still a dangerous place for children. If they are treated as an extension of the play area and used in games, accidents are likely to happen. Safety gates, other than for younger children in the home, are no longer an effective barrier.

**Safety tips**

- Teach children to hold on to the bannisters when going up or down stairs
- The stairs should never be used as a play area
- Encourage children not to leave toys etc. on the stairs.

**From windows** An unguarded or open window can still be a danger. Children may lean out too far, or try and climb from one window to another. They might accidentally lean on a partially open window. They may also misjudge how far it would be to jump to the ground.

**Safety tips**

- Fit locks or safety catches to stop windows from opening more than 6.5 cm (2.5”) to all windows that a child could reach by climbing
- Teach children about the danger of playing or fiddling with windows.

**From play equipment** Good, modern play equipment is designed to stimulate and challenge children, which means that some mishaps are inevitable. It is impossible and undesirable to remove every element of risk from play, but by ensuring that children only use appropriate play equipment, preferably over impact-absorbing surfaces, some of the more serious risk is removed. Children of this age require new challenges to keep them stimulated and interested, and over-familiarity and boredom with a well-used play area may result in their using the equipment inappropriately or dangerously.

**Safety tips**

- Select play equipment suitable for a child’s age and development
- Choose playgrounds that have impact-absorbing surfaces fitted and try to vary the play areas visited
- Show children how to use equipment correctly, but expect them to use it in unexpected ways!

**Suffocation**

Suffocation is comparatively rare in this age group, although plastic bags should still not be used for play. There have been cases of children becoming trapped and suffocating in sand while digging or playing, so parents and carers should be vigilant when children are playing.
Choking

Children of this age have generally grown out of the habit of putting things in their mouth – this usually stops around the age of three – so choking dangers are mainly restricted to food stuffs. Running or playing with food or sweets in their mouths means that children are not concentrating on chewing thoroughly, which makes choking more of a danger. Peanuts are still probably best avoided until the age of about six.

Poisoning

By now, children will have a better grasp on what is and is not food and drink. However, they may still mistake items like tablets for sweets and brightly coloured liquid chemicals for soft drinks. Also remember that some things that are fine for adults are potentially dangerous for children. Alcohol can be poisonous to a young child, whose smaller body mass will not be able to absorb it in the way an adult can, and iron tablets can cause serious illness if taken by children.

Strangulation

Each year, children are accidentally strangled while playing with belts, scarves, ties, ropes etc. Their imaginative play means that they use the everyday objects around them as props and costumes. It is a very difficult accident to prevent, as no-one wants to inhibit play, the objects involved are not dangerous in themselves and children of six or seven cannot be supervised all the time.

Safety tips
- Teach children about the danger of putting anything tightly around their necks.

Burns and scalds

Children of this age are keen to help or copy the adults around them. This gives parents and carers the dilemma of giving children tasks that are not too difficult or dangerous yet are stimulating and satisfying for the child. At this age, children can do simple household jobs, but their physical immaturity means that they cannot manage tasks that require an adult’s strength and dexterity.

Jobs involving hot food or drinks need to be carefully supervised. Children should be taught how to perform tasks safely but at an age the parent thinks is appropriate.

Matches and lighters are still dangerous things to leave in reach, but there is merit in teaching older children how to safely strike a match, thereby removing the attraction of the unknown.

Safety tips
- Use the back rings on the cooker and turn handles to the rear
- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and high up
- Always check the water temperature before letting a child get into the bath. Fit a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) to the bath hot tap to prevent rapid and severe scalding if a child turns on the hot tap
- Use sun block, a hat and loose clothing on sunny days.
Fires in the home  Each year children die in house fires, mostly as a result of smoke inhalation rather than actual burns. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

Safety tips
- Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home and test the batteries every week. Alarms give vital extra seconds to escape a fire.
- Extinguish cigarettes and matches completely.
- Avoid using chip pans – a common cause of home fires.
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of children’s reach.
- Do not overload electric sockets and replace old or worn flexes.
- Teach children what to do if they discover a fire or hear the smoke alarm going off.
- Close interior doors to contain any fire.
- Work out a family escape plan now – do not leave it until it is too late.

Drowning
Children of this age may be more confident in the water and have started to learn the rudiments of swimming, but there are still risks. As children grow, they become more adventurous and are more likely to be playing in areas away from the home and garden. This age group is liable to ignore or forget instructions not to go near certain places, so adult supervision around water is still a necessity:

Safety tips
- Supervise children playing in or near water.
- Think about starting swimming lessons for your child.
- The safest place for swimming is a public swimming pool.

Cuts
Cuts from broken glass, tin cans and other litter become more likely as children’s play becomes more adventurous and they go further afield. Knives, scissors and other sharp blades in the home should still be stored carefully and children shown how to use them correctly when the parent thinks appropriate. Low glass still poses a threat as boisterous play can result in children falling against doors and windows:

Safety tips
- Store knives and scissors safely and teach children the correct way to use them and put them away.
- Try to stop children playing in places where litter is a problem.
- Replace low glass with safety glass, board it up or cover with safety film.

Out and about
By car  For children aged from three to eleven years old but less than 135cm in height, an appropriate child restraint must be used in the front seat and, if seat belts are fitted, in the rear seat. The only exceptions to this are where the correct child restraint is not available in the following situations: in a taxi where the correct child restraint is not available; for reason of unexpected necessity over a short distance; two occupied child restraints prevent a third from being fitted. In these cases, an adult seat belt must be used.

Hopefully, a good seat-belt wearing habit will have been established by now, but parents and carers should still make sure everyone is safely strapped in before setting off. It is still best not to leave children unattended in a car for longer than a couple of minutes and the car should definitely not be regarded as a play area, even when it is parked in a drive:

Safety tips
- Make sure everyone is correctly restrained before moving off.
- Do not leave children unattended in cars for more than a few minutes.

On foot  The Department for Transport’s advice is that children under nine should always have an adult with them when crossing the road. They recommend the age range of about five to six as a good time to start introducing the basics of the Green Cross Code. However, bear in mind that young children will not remember everything all of the time.
On bicycles It is around this age that most children start to learn to ride a bike. Their co-ordination and control is better and they are more receptive to instruction. Protective head gear is vital from the very beginning, to help protect children from serious head injury, which can happen away from traffic as well as on the roads. If helmet wearing is started early, children are more likely to continue the practice as they get older.

Education

For the child
At this stage, children can start to be taught to take some responsibility for their own safety. There are no hard and fast rules though – while one six year old may be able to safely cut a slice of bread, another child of the same age might not have reached that stage yet.

Learning safety rules will help with memory development and can still be fun for the child, but parents and carers should still not over-estimate a child's ability to remember rules just because they can repeat them. Adult help and guidance is still essential during this period, while the child gains confidence and good habits are established.

Most children will by now understand that their actions have an effect on others around them, so they can begin learning about keeping other people safe as well, such as younger siblings. However, it is unwise and unfair to put too much responsibility on a child's shoulders. There are still limits to their understanding, physical abilities and memories.

Safety tips
- Start to teach children the Green Cross Code when they’re between five and six
- Encourage children to hold your hand when out
- Set a good example when crossing the road.

Education

For parents
This can almost be seen as the ‘golden age’ for establishing good safety behaviour. The child is young enough to still want to please their parents or carers and obey instructions without too much fuss while old enough to understand simple rules and the explanations for these rules. It is still important to remember that there are limits to what even the brightest child can manage, both physically and mentally, so resist the temptation to over-estimate their ability to cope with potentially hazardous situations.

Parents should realise that children can now start to be taught how to cope with some everyday hazards they face. Supervision remains important and there are still many tasks and situations which children in this age range cannot be allowed to tackle alone. However, it is a time when a child can be allowed small amounts of independence and given the chance to try new experiences.

- do not over-estimate a child's ability
- teach children how to cope with some hazardous situations
- praise good safety behaviour
- supervision is still the best accident prevention technique.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of publication for parents of children in this age group which include:

5–7s As children grow they become more aware of the idea of danger, but not the consequences, especially when they are distracted or excited. Comprehensive safety advice for children aged 5–7.

Getting over an accident – advice for children aged 8 and under.

To order either of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: www.capt.org.uk or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.

Safety tips
- All cyclists should wear correctly fitting cycle helmets
- Do not allow children to ride in traffic yet.

Safety tips
- still set a good example
- explain why some things or actions are dangerous
- make learning about safety a fun and positive experience
- teach children that their behaviour and actions affect other people.
Facts and statistics

- In 2006, there were 7,370 road accident casualties of children aged eight to eleven years in Great Britain, with 37 deaths.
- Every year around 12,000 children in this age group are injured in accidents in public playgrounds.
- It is around this age that children become more vulnerable to road accidents as they start to travel around their locality on foot more. It peaks at around the age of eleven when children change school and often start travelling to school on their own.

Abilities and characteristics

Children in this age group will by now have acquired a tremendous amount of knowledge about safe and unsafe behaviour and situations, which they will apply with varying degrees of success. This can be due to forgetting safety rules in the heat of the moment, assessing a risk incorrectly, wanting to test their abilities to the limit, showing off to friends or simple disobedience. Many accidents in this age group are now the result of play rather than unwitting encounters with dangerous objects, and boys are increasingly more at risk of an injury than girls.

While there are many things a child in this age group can manage quite safely and successfully on their own, there still has to be an element of adult supervision and instruction.

Common accidents in close-up and safety tips

Falls

Falls remain one of the most common accidents to befall children. In many ways, the risks become greater at this age, as children, especially boys, will be testing their own physical limits and may be subject to peer pressure.

Falls during play are the most common, and as children grow older, the greater the heights involved. The spirit of adventure – or even just the knowledge that they should not be there – may lead some children to play in dangerous places like building sites, derelict buildings and railways. The opportunity for severe falls in these places is much greater than in well-maintained playgrounds.

However, playgrounds need to be challenging and interesting enough so children do not get bored. So if the only playgrounds in the area are old-fashioned and boring, children may well seek out more exciting places to play.

Safety tips

- Take children to play in well-designed, stimulating play areas.
- Teach children about the dangers of playing on building sites etc.
- Discourage children from playing on stairs.

Choking

It is still possible for children of this age to choke on food. It may happen if they are eating on the move – running or playing – and chewing gum, bubble gum, sweets or ice cubes can be the culprit. Lollies on sticks can be hazardous if a child falls with it in their mouth – the stick can pierce the back of the mouth. While by this age there is not any food that children should not eat, it is still better if children chew thoroughly and be sitting or standing still while eating.

Safety tip

- Encourage children to sit or stand still while they eat.

Strangulation

As play becomes more daring and children experiment with their abilities more and more, there is the danger of strangulation. Playing with ropes or belts has the potential for danger if a child slips or a game goes wrong. This age group may experiment with putting things around their neck out of curiosity or having seen something on TV or in the newspapers.

There are also some very rare cases of children strangling after clothing necklines or drawstrings become snagged on play equipment or in bus or train doors.

Safety tips

- Explain the dangers of playing with ropes or belts or of putting things around the neck.
- Be aware of necklines catching in play equipment or automatic doors.
Burns and scalds

Children of this age will be increasingly independent when it comes to many everyday chores, such as making a cup of tea or preparing a simple meal. Also, at the age of seven children become eligible to join uniformed organisations, where many such tasks are taught as part of badge work.

It is important that this age group has a degree of independence around the home, as long as an adult has shown them how to carry out tasks safely. So boiling a kettle, operating the microwave, using oven gloves etc. should be within the capabilities of most children in this age group. There are still some jobs that may be too much for a child – for example, ironing is still best done by someone older – but showing a child how to avoid burns and scalds is a valuable life lesson.

Matches and lighters should still be kept safely, although this will not deter an older child set on getting hold of them. Most children of this age will know that playing with matches and lighters holds a degree of risk, which may be the attraction in the first place.

Safety tips

- Teach children the dangers of playing with matches and lighters
- Show children how to put water in, boil and pour a kettle safely
- If you think your child is capable, teach them how to safely use the oven or microwave
- Do not allow a child to use a chip pan, even under supervision
- To avoid rapid and severe scalds, a thermostatic mixing valve (TMV) should be fitted to the bath hot tap
- Use sun block, a hat and loose clothing on sunny days

Drowning

Children in this age bracket have usually at least started to learn to swim, either with parents or with their school. However, being able to swim is not a guarantee of safety in the water, especially in rivers, canals, the sea and flooded gravel pits, where there may be underwater debris, sudden changes in depth and low water temperatures.

Children may not realise that swimming in the local pool and in a river are two totally different propositions. They may over-estimate their own skills, under-estimate the depth of water and strength of current or be dared to jump in by friends. Even with adult supervision, swimming in open areas of water is potentially dangerous, and even the strongest swimmer can get into trouble.

Safety tips

- The safest place to swim is in the local public swimming pool
- No-one, not even strong adult swimmers, should swim in canals, rivers or flooded gravel pits

Fires in the home

Each year children die in house fires, mostly as a result of smoke inhalation rather than actual burns. There are general fire safety rules which apply to all age groups, child and adult, and which can potentially save lives:

Safety tips

- Fit a smoke alarm on every level of your home and test the batteries every week. Alarms give vital extra seconds to escape a fire
- Extinguish cigarettes and matches completely
- Avoid using chip pans – a common cause of home fires
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of children’s reach
- Do not overload electric sockets and replace old or worn flexes
- Teach children what to do if they discover a fire or hear the smoke alarm going off
- Close interior doors to contain any fire
- Work out a family escape plan now – do not leave it until it is too late.

years
Cuts

Many cuts sustained by this age group occur in the kitchen while legitimately using knives or scissors. With new-found independence should come lessons in safely handling sharp implements, both in the kitchen and in the garden. Inexperience is to blame for a large proportion of the accidents, rather than clumsiness, as children by now have quite sophisticated physical dexterity.

Safety tip
- Show children how to use – and store – knives and scissors safely.

Out and about

By car For children aged from three to eleven years old but less than 135cm in height, an appropriate child restraint must be used in the front seat and, if seat belts are fitted, in the rear seat. The only exceptions to this are where the correct child restraint is not available in the following situations: in a taxi where the correct child restraint is not available; for reason of unexpected necessity over a short distance; two occupied child restraints prevent a third from being fitted. In these cases, an adult seat belt must be used.

However, this is an age that children may become less co-operative about wearing the seat belt and parents may be tempted not to engage in a lengthy battle over it. Refusing to wear a belt may be a statement of independence or simple disobedience and it may well be physically impossible to force a strapping ten year old into a belt. Children have to understand the importance of using the belt on every journey, and why you insist on it – and remember to always wear one yourself.

Safety tip
- Always make sure all passengers are correctly belted in, even on the shortest journey.

On foot As mentioned in the introduction to this section, this age range is very vulnerable to road accidents as pedestrians. Even if they obey every rule about crossing the road, children of this age still cannot judge speeds and distances as accurately as an adult can. Their smaller size makes them less visible to drivers, children may not be able to see over cars, and their actions can be unpredictable. If they spot a friend across the road, they may forget everything else and just rush out into the traffic. DfT’s advice is that children under nine should always have an adult with them when crossing the road. However, they suggest the age range of seven to nine as the best time to explain the Green Cross Code in detail:
1. First find a safe place to cross, then stop.
2. Stand on the pavement near the kerb.
3. Look all around for traffic and listen.
4. If traffic is coming, let it pass.
5. When it is safe walk straight across the road – don’t run.
6. Keep looking and listening for traffic while you cross.

This is an abbreviated version of the code taken from ‘Get across road safety’ – a free leaflet produced by the DfT and available from them or via the local Road Safety Unit.

Safety tips
- Reinforce the importance of good road sense whenever possible
- Give children as much supervised experience of dealing with traffic as you can
- Before allowing a child to walk a new route alone, do it together, discussing any hazards and how they might be tackled
- On dark mornings and evenings, children should wear light coloured clothes with reflective armbands or strips.

By bicycle Children of this age should not cycle unsupervised in traffic, as they lack the experience and ability to judge speed and distance accurately. Many accidents result from children trying to out-do their friends on their bikes by performing stunts or cycling in dangerous areas.
**Education**

**For the child**

A child in this age group can be taught to carry out their own ‘risk assessment’ of many situations. They have enough knowledge, experience and physical ability to judge for themselves whether some activities or actions are safe or not. However, they may not always reach the correct conclusion because they have over-estimated their ability or under-estimated the potential danger.

This is because they are still learning to cope with situations that adults take for granted. Adults make risk assessments every day without hardly realising it – when to cross the road, how high to reach from the top of a ladder, how far to let a match burn down without burning their fingers. Children need to be shown how to assess these risks and allowed to practice with adult help and supervision before they can do them safely on their own. Some tasks will still be beyond them but a surprising amount can be tackled, providing the parent feels the child is mentally and physically ready.

Children need to learn to recognise hazards and be able to judge whether they can safely negotiate them. They also need to understand that some things are still too complex or dangerous for them to tackle alone or even with supervision.

- set a good example
- give children the chance to learn in safety and with appropriate supervision
- allow them opportunities to test their new skills.

**For parents**

This can be a confusing time for parents. One moment their child is handling quite complicated tasks competently and safely, the next they manage to hurt themselves doing something simple and ‘childish’. While children of this age are gaining knowledge and experience all the time, they are still children – unpredictable and adventurous, with limited life experience and in need of a guiding hand. It is also now almost impossible to force a child of this age and size into doing something – parents will need to appeal to their intelligence and judgement to get the result they desire.

The best skill a parent can have in helping their child tackle new experiences is the ability to accurately judge what s/he is and is not ready for or capable of. Every child of this age is different and while as babies and toddlers most of these differences were physical ones – one baby might crawl or walk two months ahead of another the same age – as eight to eleven year olds they are mostly mental and emotional.

It can be difficult to let go and accept that a child is now capable of tasks you have always performed for them. Parental instinct is to protect and provide, but children in this age range need to be given a degree of independence based on knowledge and experience.

- you are the best judge of your child’s capabilities
- discuss safety issues with your child
- teach your child how to tackle hazards safely and supervise them while they gain experience
- accept that a degree of independence is necessary and inevitable.

The Child Accident Prevention Trust produces a range of publication for parents of children in this age group which include:

- **Step safely from the edge** – tailored advice for older children as they become more independent
- **Getting over an accident** – advice for children over 8

To order either of these publications, or sample copies, please visit the CAPT website: [www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk) or call 020 7608 7368 for a publications catalogue.
Useful information and websites

Below is a list of useful websites. Further website links can be found on our website www.capt.org.uk

**General information about child safety**
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/safeguarding
www.direct.gov.uk/childsafety
www.rospa.org.uk

**Research and statistics**
www.berr.gov.uk
www.hassandlass.org.uk
www.communities.gov.uk
www.dft.gov.uk
www.statistics.gov.uk
www.nisra.gov.uk

**Home and garden safety**
www.firekills.gov.uk
www.saferfireworks.com
www.safehome.org.uk

**Road safety**
www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk
www.childcarseats.org.uk

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**Free supporting leaflet**

You can download the ‘How safe is your child at home’ publication or order free copies from www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications. Search using the ref: DCSF- 00254-2009

Copies can also be obtained for free from: DCSF Publications
Tel: 0845 60 222 60 Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Textphone: 0845 60 555 60
Please quote ref: 00254-2009LEF-EN.
Other resources to help you

These are examples from our comprehensive range of full colour resources available from the Child Accident Prevention Trust to help you in your work. For further information including prices and how to order visit www.capt.org.uk
If your work involves you in child safety, please join the Child Accident Prevention Trust’s mailing list. You will then receive information about our resources, services and programmes, including your free Child Safety Week resource pack.

To join our mailing list please complete this form and then either post or fax it back to the address shown at the end.

We will hold the contact information you give us on our electronic database. We will never give your contact information to third parties without your explicit agreement.

If we don’t have your email address, we can’t alert you to special offers on our resources, tell you about our new projects, or send you a special preview of the Child Safety Week resource pack.

Please note that we can only offer our mailing list service to people whose work involves them in child safety, not to school students or parents.

### 1. Your contact details

First name

Family name

Job title

Organisation

Department

Address

Town/City

Postcode

Telephone

Email address

### 2. Where you work

Do you personally mainly work

- in England
- in Wales
- in Scotland
- UK-wide
- in N Ireland
- elsewhere (please specify)

### 3. The sector in which you work

Which one of the following most closely describes the general sector in which you work?

- Voluntary or community sector
- Statutory sector (e.g. health, local authority, fire service, etc)
- Commercial sector (e.g. retailing, manufacturing, commercial childcare, etc)
- Other sector or you work as an individual (e.g. as a registered childminder)

### 4. Your particular area of work

Which one of the following most closely describes the area in which you work?

- Education
- Children, young people and families (including childcare but not education)
- Health
- Road safety
- Fire prevention
- Other

### 5. Confirmation

I would like to receive promotional material about CAPT’s publications, events and services

- [ ] by email
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We will not distribute your contact details to third parties without your explicit agreement.

Signed

Dated

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