



Home Fall Prevention for Infants Ages Birth to One Year

Each day in New York State (NYS), an average of 18 babies less than one year of age are treated at a hospital due to an unintentional fall, and an average of one baby will be injured severely enough to require hospitalization.

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations and hospital emergency department visits for children ages 14 years and under in NYS.

The good news is that **you**, as a parent or caregiver, can play a major role in preventing home fall injuries.

What are the most common causes of falls and why?

- The majority of infant falls occur at home. Usually, these are a result of falling from an elevated surface such as a bed, sofa, chair, stairs or changing table.
- During their first year, babies begin to roll, kick, and push against things and progress to crawling, standing, and even taking their first steps. These mobility milestones are exciting, but safety precautions need to be considered.

Are baby walkers safe to use?

- No. Baby walkers should not be used. Babies using them may tip over, fall out, or fall down stairs.

What are the alternatives to using baby walkers?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following alternatives to baby walkers:

- Stationary walkers: These devices have seats that rotate and bounce but do not have wheels.
- Playpens: These enclosed areas are great safety zones for children as they learn to sit, crawl, or walk.
- High chairs: Older children often enjoy sitting up in high chairs and playing with toys on the tray.

How can I prevent my baby from falling down the stairs?

- Properly install safety gates in your home. Anchor safety gates to the wall at both the top and bottom of stairs.
- Do not use accordion-style or tension gates in your home. Your baby can get his or her head caught in it and strangle.

What types of features can help make windows safer?

- All windows above the first floor should have locks and operable window guards. Window screens alone are not strong enough to keep a child from falling out a window.
- Window guards prevent the window from being opened more than four inches. They can be removed in case of fire. It is possible for a child to fit through an opening as small as five inches.

Is direct supervision always necessary at home?

- Infants, even those who have never rolled over, and young children should not be left unattended. The best way to prevent injury is to watch, listen and stay near your child. While there is no equal substitution for direct supervision, if you do need to step away from your baby for a short time, put him or her in a safe place, like a crib or playpen.
- Never leave your child alone while he or she is on a high surface like a changing table or bed. Always keep one hand on your child while you change him/her.

What are some other safety tips?

- Place furniture away from windows and anchor pieces to the wall (especially television sets). As your infant begins to crawl, he or she may pull and lean on furniture to balance him/her, causing it to fall.
- Child safety devices, like safety belts and straps, should always be used when available. This will reduce the risk of your child falling out of their car seat, high chair or carrier.
- Infant carriers should be placed on a stable surface, preferably the floor.
- Crib sides should be kept up and firmly secured while your baby is in a crib.

Where can I find more information about home safety?

- American Academy of Pediatrics (www.healthychildren.org)

- Home Safety Council (www.homesafetycouncil.org)
- Safe Kids USA (www.usa.safekids.org)
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (www.cpsc.gov)

NYS Data Source: NYS DOH, Bureau of Injury Prevention
http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/
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