

secure them for life!

Prevention

Beware of tobacco smoke

Cigarette, cigar and pipe smoke are very dangerous. Young children are especially vulnerable. The children of smokers are more susceptible than other children to asthma, earaches, bronchitis, pneumonia and upper respiratory tract infections. Exposure to tobacco smoke also increases the risk of crib death. Regardless of the number of cigarettes smoked in the presence of children, there is no safe exposure to tobacco smoke. Children are more fragile than adults because their organs are developing.

If you smoke, smoke outside the home

Smoking in the home threatens the health of your loved ones as much as your own health. Hazardous chemicals found in smoke spread through the air and stay there for several months even if you open the windows, run a range hood fan or smoke in only one room. A very powerful ventilation system such as those found in public places takes up to 3 hours to eliminate the smoke from a single cigarette. This is why you shouldn't smoke in your house even if the children are not around. For the sake of your child's health, do not smoke in your home or car.

Butt out

The only way to protect your child against the harmful effects of tobacco is to stop smoking. Give yourself a break. Your baby will be grateful to you, now and later on. More smokers' children than non-smokers' children take up smoking as teenagers.

A health professional can explain the various methods used to stop smoking. A number of community agencies also provide support. Contact your CSSS (CLSC). To obtain information and support in kicking the habit, call the J'ARRÊTE! help line at 1 866 527-7383.

Your baby's safety

Your baby develops very quickly up to the age of 2 years. She explores her environment without realizing the dangers that lurk there. Be alert! Be doubly attentive if your baby is active. She can escape your surveillance in the blink of an eye.

Falls, burns, drowning, poisoning and choking are major causes of death among children. Protect your child by creating a safe environment. **Check every room in your house from a child's eye-level view.** Block staircases. Lock drawers and the gate to the swimming pool. Cover electrical outlets with solidly installed insulating caps. Store toxic products in a safe place. An accident can happen quickly. By adapting your house to your baby, you will reduce the risk of her having an unpleasant experience.



Photo: Annie Fournier

Your baby's room

The bedroom must be bright and well ventilated. If possible, it should have a window. Heat it to approximately 20°C (68°F). If your child perspires at night, she is too heavily covered.

Humidity should be maintained between 30% and 45%, never more. Avoid, if possible, the use of a humidifier. If you do use a humidifier, clean it and change the filters according to the manufacturer's directions. Change the water every day. Every 3 days, wash the humidifier with soapy water and disinfect it with a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. If condensation appears on the windows, the humidity is too high and will cause mildew. Avoid rugs that absorb humidity and trap dust. Wood and vinyl floor coverings are preferable and easier to maintain.

Children love to play in their rooms. Make sure that your baby's room is safe (see "Be careful," page 387).

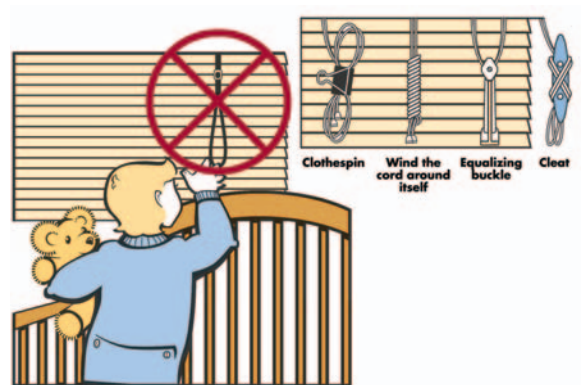
Blinds

The pull cords of blinds must be kept well out of the reach of children, who could strangle themselves playing with them. Attach blind and drapery pull cords throughout the house in such a way that children cannot reach them. **Place your baby's bed far from the window.**

Cheap PVC-based mini-blinds can cause lead poisoning and neurological problems in children. Health Canada recommends getting rid of such blinds. Check the product label when buying blinds to see if they contain lead.

Your baby's bed

Your baby's safety when she is in bed is very important. If the bed is not new, you must ensure that it is safe. Check to ensure that she cannot hurt herself on screws or parts that are not properly fastened. The sides of the bed must be raised when the baby is lying down. Always lay your baby **ON HER BACK** to sleep, never on her side or tummy.



Baby beds manufactured prior to 1986 no longer comply with the Health Canada regulation on product safety and may not be sold. Manufacturers and retailers are well aware of the regulation. Consumers can be confident that new baby beds now comply with current standards. Avoid using beds that were given to you or beds sold in used furniture stores, at flea markets or garage sales.

Check your baby's bed regularly to ensure that it is in good condition. The sides of the bed must be raised and locked when the baby is in bed. The mattress should be firm and fit snugly on the bed, with no more than 3 cm (1¹/₈ inches) between it and the frame of the bed. Movable hooks that support the bottom of the bed are prohibited. Make sure that the springs are solidly anchored. They must not move. The space between the bars should not exceed 6 cm (2³/₈ inches).

The baby's bed may be placed in your room.

If you attach toys to the bed, the cords must not be more than 15 cm (6 inches) long. Never leave a young child unsupervised on a big bed.

You can use an antique cradle during the first month of your baby's life. Beyond that age it is dangerous to do so.

If you find it easier, breast-feed your baby in your bed. We recommend that you put your baby back in her own bed to sleep. There are risks for your baby when she sleeps in her parents' bed. These risks are greater when the mother or baby have been exposed to cigarette smoke during pregnancy or after birth.

Moreover, the baby should never share the bed of someone who:

- smokes;
- has consumed alcohol;
- is sick;
- has taken medication or any substance that induces sleep;
- is extremely tired.

These conditions increase the risk of crib death.

An important reminder

- If you are unusually tired, you have consumed alcohol, taken medication or other substances that could make you more tired, **do not bring the baby in bed with you, even for nursing.**
- Do not sleep with your baby on a sofa or any other stuffed furniture.
- Waterbeds are dangerous for young children. A baby lying on her stomach could suffocate.
- Animals must not sleep in the same bed as the baby.
- When you are visiting or staying in a hotel, it is dangerous for a baby to sleep in an adult bed, even more so if she is surrounded by pillows, which can suffocate her. A baby can sleep safely on a floor covered with a big, thick blanket. Portable playpens can also be safe. However, do not add a mattress, cushions, pillows or anything else used as a mattress.

Bedding

The only bedding you need is a fitted sheet for the mattress and a blanket. Wash and thoroughly rinse the sheets before using them. Avoid cushions or decorative fabric for bed skirts, pillows, bolsters, quilts and stuffed animals as your baby could suffocate against these objects.

When your baby starts to move around, objects should be avoided since she could use them to climb out of bed and injure herself in a fall. Regularly check blankets for dangling threads. Do not leave blankets on your baby's bed when she is awake. She could become tangled up in them and suffocate.

Check the borders and stitching of comforters and blankets regularly for dangling threads.

Take the following precautions if members of your family are subject to allergies.

- Destroy dust mites, which live off dead skin and thrive in warm, damp beds, by frequently washing sheets in very hot water.
- Put a zippered plastic cover on the mattress. Cover the zipper with adhesive tape.
- Do not use feather comforters and pillows.
- Avoid carpets, fabric-covered furniture, plush toys and knick-knacks that collect dust.
- Dust the baby's room with a damp cloth.

In the kitchen

Place your baby's highchair well away from kitchen counters and the table. She could push on them with her foot and tip over the highchair. Strap her into the chair to prevent her from climbing over the chair back or tray.

Keep an eye on her. Some babies manage to get out of their chairs even when they are strapped in!

When your child is in a portable chair, strap her in and do not leave her unattended on the table.

She could fall with the chair by kicking or trying to turn around. Put the chair on the floor instead.

When your baby begins to crawl around, always keep an eye on her. Do not put a tablecloth on the table as your baby could grab it and be injured by falling objects. Turn the handles of jugs toward the centre of the table, sideboard or counter. Do not leave kitchen utensils lying around.

Turn the handles of pots and pans away from the edge of the stove. When you are frying foods, keep your child well away to prevent her being splattered with grease or oil. Keep her away from a hot oven. She could press her hands against it.

Be careful with certain foods, that could be choking hazards for young children (see “How to prevent choking,” page 274).

Staircases

Use gates to block all staircases. Solidly attach the gates to the doorframe or the walls of the

hallway. If the gate is not new, check to ensure that it complies with current safety standards (see “Useful addresses,” page 462).



Outdoors

Be careful around swimming pools. Block access from your house and lawn to your in-ground or above-ground swimming pool by putting up a fence at least 1.2 m (48 inches) high with a gate that closes and locks automatically. Never leave the ladder down when an above-ground pool is unsupervised. Install the water filtration system more than 2 m (72 1/2 inches) from the pool to prevent children from using it to climb over the fence. Put a fence around the water heater. Check the electrical ground to reduce the risk of electrocution.

Be careful, too, around shallow ponds such as water gardens. A baby can drown in 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) of water.

Extra vigilance is called for around lakes and rivers. Your baby can scamper away from you very quickly. Life jackets are compulsory for all passengers in boats. Properly attach your child's life jacket. If the boat capsizes, it could save your life and hers.

It is recommended that swings and other playground equipment be installed on a layer of sand or wood chips 15 to 30 cm (6 to 12 inches) thick. If your child falls, the consequences will not be as serious as when she falls on gravel or grass. We do not recommend allowing your child to play on this equipment when the ground is frozen. Your child should not wear clothing with drawstring or a bicycle helmet when she plays on such equipment.

Cover sandboxes to prevent animals from defecating in them.

When going out

Walking

Be very careful when you carry your baby in a front or back infant carrier as a fall could injure you and your baby. During the winter, make sure that your baby is properly dressed, is not cold and can move her legs. Immobilizing the legs could lead to serious frostbite.

Baby strollers and carriages

There are several types of baby strollers and carriages. The choice is up to you. Convertible models, which serve as a carriage, bed and stroller, are practical year round.

One excellent choice is the stroller with an adjustable back. Your baby can be taken for a stroll or have a nap in it, always under supervision and with the safety belt securely fastened.

The folding umbrella-stroller is practical but is so light that it sometimes tips forward. Make sure the child is strapped in. Make sure, too, that her fingers are out of the way when you press the folding mechanism.

Avoid overloading the stroller in order to prevent it from tipping over. Do not use it to carry packages or clothing. Be vigilant. Regularly check that screws and bolts are tight and that the brakes are working properly. Use them.

Cycling

You can ride with your baby in a bicycle baby seat when she is at least 1 year old. Choose a bicycle seat with a headrest and leg-guards. Your child must be sitting up straight with her shoulders and head supported. Remember the safety helmets: yours and your child's. Make sure that the seat is properly installed and that the straps are correctly adjusted. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions to determine the maximum recommended weight of the child. Some models are not compatible with certain bicycles.

Never leave your child in the bicycle seat if you are not on the bicycle, which could fall over. Ride slowly. It will take longer to stop when you brake. If you are not used to carrying a child on the bicycle, practise by riding the bike with a sack of potatoes that weighs as much as your child in the bicycle seat.

You may prefer to buy a bicycle trailer, which has more space and can be used to transport 2 children. Properly attach the child seatbelt and install a pennant to ensure visibility.

Choose cycling paths well away from roads, which are much safer. Be careful at intersections.

Traveling by car

Always use a car safety seat (see "Car safety seats," page 377). If you have to nurse your baby, stop and hold her in your arms. Never leave a baby under the age of 6 months drinking from a bottle unsupervised.

Parents are advised not to buy a used car safety seat from someone they do not know.

It is essential to be thoroughly familiar with the seat, which must:

- be in good condition and not be missing any parts;
- bear the manufacturer's and Transport Canada's compliance seal;
- have an instruction booklet;
- not have been involved in an accident;
- not have been subject to a manufacturer's recall (call CAA-Québec to check);
- have been manufactured **less than 10 years ago** according to Transport Canada and **not more than 6 to 8 years ago according to certain manufacturers** (contact the manufacturer for details).

Car safety seats

By law, in any moving vehicle your child must use a car safety seat adapted to her weight and height until she measures 63 cm (25 inches) or more when seated (measured from the seat to the top of the head).

The safety seat must be used from the day you leave the hospital. If you wish to rent a car safety seat before you leave the hospital, check with your CSSS (CLSC).

There are 3 types of seats: infant seats, child seats and booster seats. Change the seat as your child grows. **Read carefully the manufacturer's instructions before using the seat.**

Since September 2002, all vehicles manufactured in Canada have been equipped with a **Universal Anchorage System (UAS)** (Isofix or LATCH) and all car safety seats manufactured in Canada are equipped with a belt that is attached to the vehicle's UAS, which facilitates installation.

See pages 17 to 19 for infant seats.

Child seats

In a vehicle, a well-installed child seat is the safest way to transport a child weighing between 9 and 18 kg (20 and 40 lb.). **It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.**

Installation of the seat – Put the child seat on the back seat of the car. The seat should face forward **ONLY** if the child is able to stand by herself (around the age of 1 year).

Before then and if the seat design allows for it, the child will be safer facing backwards. Attach the seat to the vehicle using the seatbelt or the Universal Anchorage System. If the seat does not have a belt for the UAS, you can attach it separately.

When the child seat is installed facing forward, attach the restraint strap to the vehicle's anchoring point to prevent the top of the seat from tilting. The vehicle manufacturer locates the anchor bolt there. To obtain additional information on the installation of car safety seats, consult the vehicle owner's manual or contact CAA-Québec.

Adjusting the harness before use – Put the harness in the seat slots that are higher than the child's shoulders. Make sure that the harness is taut (not more than 1 finger's width between the harness and the child's collarbone) and that the chest clip is raised to the level of the child's

armpits (under the arm and in the middle of the chest). If your vehicle's seat belts lock only on impact, the seat belt used to hold the car seat should be equipped with a locking clip (see manufacturer's instructions).

Never place a car seat in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with passenger-side airbags. If the airbag inflates, it could seriously injure or kill your child.

Booster seats

In a vehicle, a properly used booster seat is the safest way to transport children weighing more than 18 kg (40 lb.). **Carefully read the manufacturer's instructions.**

This restraint system helps to properly place the shoulder belt in the middle of the shoulder (on the collarbone) and the lap belt on the hips (and not on the stomach). Put the booster seat on the back seat of the vehicle.

It is recommended that a booster seat be used on a bench seat if the car seatback is low. The child's head must be properly supported. If the vehicle has rear seat shoulder belts, do not place the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind her back.

Before you stop using the booster seat, make sure that the seatbelt is properly positioned on your child's shoulder and hips. The booster seat must be used for as long as is necessary. Bearing in mind the weight limit recommended by manufacturers, some children are safer sitting on a booster seat even if they measure over 63 cm (25 inches) when seated.

When your child is big enough to ride in a car without a booster seat, put her in the back seat and make sure that she does up her seatbelt.

Flying

If you travel by plane with your child, you can seat her in her car safety seat if it meets the CMVSS 213, 213.1 or 213.2 standard.

Taxis

In the absence of a car safety seat, the child must wear a seatbelt unless she is too small to stand by herself.

Children under 12 years of age should be seated and belted in the back seat since it is the safest area.

Baby accessories

Portable chairs

Portable chairs or infant carriers are used as chairs in the home. **It is dangerous to use an infant carrier as a car safety seat.** Until your baby is 2 months old, leave the infant carrier in the almost recumbent position. She must be comfortable without being able to turn her body. Do not set the infant carrier on a bed or other soft surface. **Never leave the child alone on a table** or elsewhere.

Highchairs

Highchairs must have a wide, stable base. The tray must be easy to clean. Block the tray to prevent the child from falling or slipping underneath it. As soon as a baby sits properly, she will like her chair, from which she can observe her little empire. **Make sure that she is properly**

strapped in. Never leave her alone. Move the highchair away from walls, furniture, appliances and blinds.

Security gates

Accordion-style expandable security gates with large diamond- or V-shaped openings are prohibited. A baby could catch her head in the gate. Choose the appropriate model of gate, bearing in mind its use. Various models are available, including expandable, rigid, pressure, wooden, plastic and metal gates. Make sure that the gate is solidly anchored to the doorframe.

Playpens

Wooden – The bars must be 6 cm ($2\frac{3}{8}$ inches) apart. Raise all 4 sides of the playpen. A child could fall into any space between the mattress and the bars and suffocate.

Remove from the playpen any toys on which the child could climb.

Mesh – The netting must be like mosquito netting so that nothing can catch in the holes. To ensure that the playpen remains stationary, it should not have more than 2 wheels.

A playpen may be useful for a young child while her little brother or sister is being breast-fed. The older child will be safe in the playpen, under supervision and near you. Ensure that the playpen's locking mechanism is fully engaged. When you are free to supervise her, she will enjoy getting out of the playpen to move around, crawl and explore.

Front or back infant carrier

The front infant carrier is very practical and infants usually appreciate it. It enables parents to move about while maintaining warm physical contact with their baby (see "Excessive crying

[colic],” page 37). The back infant carrier is suitable for babies 6 months or over. In both instances, the baby snuggles against her father or mother. Choose the model that is comfortable for you and your baby.



Photo: Alexandre Ayoite

Make sure that she is warm enough when you use the carrier outdoors in cold weather (see “Baby’s first outings,” page 154).

Baby swing

A swing takes up a lot of space and is not an essential baby item. However, a baby will find it amusing for short periods. Until your baby reaches the age of 6 months, lay her in the swing. Keep an eye on her, especially if other children push the swing.

Other accessories

Some accessories are popular, but serve no useful purpose.

Hammock – A cloth hammock can be hung over the child’s bed, using 8 adjustable straps attached to the bars. It can be dangerous and does not offer the advantages of a firm, stable mattress. It is an unnecessary expense.

Walker – Walkers have been prohibited in Canada since April 2004 because they cause numerous accidents and injuries and there is no way to make them safe. Walkers do not help a child develop. All too often, babies using a walker fall downstairs, rapidly come into close contact with hot objects or tip over before a parent can reach them.

Stationary activity centre – A stationary activity centre is like a walker without wheels. Never leave a child in it unsupervised. It is unnecessary since your baby needs to play on her tummy to develop strength in her arms and learn to crawl.

Jolly Jumper exerciser – We do not recommend this exerciser for the same reasons as the stationary activity centre.

Toys and safety

Toys are stimulating and contribute to a child's development. Choose attractive toys that are appropriate to her age and needs.

She will appreciate the presence of her parents or an older brother or sister to help her discover her toys and learn how to use them. She will then be able to repeat what she has learned and play more independently.

Toys must:

- be washable;
- be non-toxic (read the label);
- be unbreakable;
- be non-flammable;
- be big enough that the child cannot swallow them or put them in her mouth;
- comply with federal government safety standards (see "Useful addresses," page 462).

Avoid soft vinyl (PVC) toys and rattles. Some substances used to soften the toys are toxic. A child can absorb these substances while chewing on the toy. Avoid rubber bath and wading pool toys that retain water, as they promote the development of germs.

Toy guns that children buy or make are fairly popular. Children should be supervised when using these toys so they do not get hurt. The compulsory rule is that while playing, they must not “really” hurt anyone. The “pretend” dimension of these games provides children the opportunity to express their emotions while teaching them the distinction between make-believe and reality.

Before you buy

- Read product labels to determine the recommended age.
- Check that the toy is easy to handle.
- Make sure that it does not have any sharp edges or pointed tips.
- Make sure that the eyes and nose of teddy bears are properly sewn on. Big toys must not have parts that are likely to break off.
- Beware of small objects and parts. A child could put them in her nose or mouth and suffocate. A gauge is available to help parents identify toys that are dangerous (see “Useful addresses,” page 462). In the meantime, use a roll of toilet paper as a guide. If the object goes through the tube, keep it out of your child’s reach.

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- Any rattle that slides vertically through a 50-mm x 35-mm (2-inch x 1 1/2-inch) oval opening is too small and is dangerous.
- Musical toys are fine. They stimulate the baby's hearing and eyesight. However, check the gears and make sure that small parts cannot break off.
- Be careful with noisy toys. They can damage the child's hearing and irritate you. Try them out before buying them.
- Consult the list of the best toys on the *Protégez-Vous* magazine's Web site (www.protegez-vous.qc.ca). However, remember that a toy recommended for a 3-year-old child can be dangerous for a baby under the age of 1 year.

You can buy second-hand toys, furniture and other items for your baby, but be vigilant. Regulations governing these products have been tightened in recent years to ensure your child's safety. Before you buy a used product, contact Health Canada for information at 1 800 561-3350.

After you buy

- Read the manufacturer's instructions.
- Discard plastic, cellophane and polystyrene (Styrofoam) packaging materials.
- Be careful with spent batteries, since leaking batteries can be corrosive. Do not allow the liquid to touch your baby's skin or enter her mouth.
- Remove battery-operated toys when your child is sleeping.

- Check her toys regularly and discard broken ones.
- Discard deflated balloons. A child can choke on them if she puts them in her mouth. Only an adult should inflate balloons.
- Always keep an eye on a playing child.

Putting toys away

Get your child into the habit of putting her toys away in a basket, a lidless box or on a low shelf. When she is older, she can put her toys in a vented toy box. If the box has a lid, make sure that it is fastened in such a way that it cannot fall on the child's head or fingers.

Be careful

In the sun

The skin is the body's largest organ. It must be protected against dehydration and exposure to blazing sunlight. While sunlight is essential for good health (see "Vitamins and minerals," page 346), babies must not be exposed directly to the sun without proper protection, such as PABA-free sunscreen (PABA may cause allergic reactions), a hat and a parasol. Babies have very thin skin that burns easily so avoid exposing them to the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Baby oil offers no protection against the sun and increases the risk of sunburn.

Before 6 months – Put your baby in the shade. Applying sunscreen to her delicate skin could cause an allergic reaction.

After 6 months – When your baby plays outdoors, make sure she wears a hat and clothing with tightly woven fibres that cover her arms and legs. Apply sunscreen to her bare skin 30 minutes before she is exposed to the sun. Repeat the application every 2 hours and after swimming. Up to 85% of ultraviolet rays penetrate clouds. Always apply sunscreen, even when it is cloudy. There are several good brands. Choose one with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Your pharmacist can advise you.

If your child is taking medication, consult your doctor or pharmacist. Her skin may become more sensitive to the sun, while certain sunscreens may cause irritation, rashes and swelling.

Children should never go to a tanning salon.

Eyes and the sun

Beware of all sources of radiance, whether it be the sun's direct rays or rays reflected off sand, water and snow. There are several ways to limit the level of harmful rays that reach the eyes:

- the natural closing of the pupil;
- wearing a wide-brimmed hat or cap, whether or not the child is exposed directly or indirectly to the sun;
- wearing protective glasses, which must block UV rays (UV 400), be of good quality, and have a scratch-proof surface.

Practical advice concerning the sun

- To protect your child from the sun, never seat her facing it. Position her (under 1 year of age) in the shade or in indirect sunlight.
- A child should never look directly at the sun, whether or not there is an eclipse.

- Do not let a child play with magnifying glasses or mirrors that could reflect the sun's rays.
- Consult an optometrist or an ophthalmologist if your child cannot tolerate even indirect sunlight or if her eyes water when she is outdoors.

Quality of sun protection

The sunglasses lens and frame should be carefully chosen by the parents.

Lenses should block all harmful UV rays. UV400 should be indicated on the glasses, an indication of UV100 or UV protection is inadequate.

The lens colour is important; green and grey lenses do not change how colours are perceived. Avoid other coloured lenses that change the way things look.

Most sunglasses purchased from superstores have moulded lenses that cause distortion for some wearers and discomfort such as headaches and, ultimately, impaired vision. **Remember that it is better to wear no glasses than to wear glasses that provide inadequate protection. Consult your optometrist for advice.**

Dogs do not instinctively love children. What should you do? Prepare your dog psychologically for the baby's arrival. Before your baby's birth, gradually reduce the time you spend with your dog. Push the baby carriage or rock a doll to get your dog used to your future routine.

Play baby sounds for him. Do not allow your dog to climb on chairs or take food off the table. As soon as the baby is born, let him sniff the newborn's clothing. Speak kindly to your dog when your baby is present and ignore the animal when your baby is sleeping. He will associate the child with a source of pleasure.

Falls

The following situations commonly lead to falls:

- A baby seat is on a table, the baby moves and the seat slides and falls to the floor.
- An adult is changing a baby's diaper on the changing table and moves away to get something.
- A child climbs onto a piece of furniture next to a window and falls out.
- A child is left alone in her highchair, gets out of it and falls or makes the highchair fall over.

Never leave your baby unattended on the table when you are changing her diaper, even for a few seconds. If she moves a lot, change her on the floor.

Do not leave footstools or low furniture near windows. A child who is crawling could climb onto them. Also make sure that no furniture or objects can fall on your child's head.

Never leave a baby's portable chair on the table, choose the floor instead.

PREVENTION • HEALTH

Power cords

Remove power cords such as the cords of floor lamps running over rugs or under furniture. Do not let your baby chew on them. Unplug cords that are within her reach. Childproof socket covers should be placed solidly over wall outlets.

The power cords of electrical appliances such as irons and electric kettles should never be left dangling. When you are ironing, make sure your baby is in a safe place such as her playpen. Always keep her in your sight.

Hot water

Hot tap water can give children second- or even third-degree burns. If the water temperature is 60°C (140°F), one second of exposure can cause such burns. Children love to play with taps, so be especially vigilant.

The temperature of your water should not exceed 49°C (120°F). In households with electric water heaters, temperature control devices can be installed on the bathtub and bathroom sink taps. If you have a gas- or oil-fired water heater, set the thermostat to 49°C. An electric water heater must be set at 60°C to prevent the development of the bacteria that cause legionellosis, a severe type of pneumonia.

When you prepare a bath, run the hot and cold water simultaneously. Always check the water temperature before you put your child in the tub. Do not allow an infant to be washed by an older sister or brother.



Fires and burns

Install a smoke detector on each floor of the house and replace the batteries once a year. If need be, consult your municipal fire department. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand. Do not leave matches lying around and if you own a cigarette lighter, make sure it has a safety lock. If you use candles for lighting, put them on a metal candleholder and keep the wicks short. Be careful of hot wax.

Children's clothing must be flame-resistant (designed so it will not catch fire). Loose-fitting sleepwear can more easily catch fire. Choose polyester or nylon garments, which do not burn as easily as cotton.

Children have thinner skin than adults. They are at greater risk of being burned by soup, coffee and other hot liquids. Avoid consuming such liquids when you are carrying your baby. Beware of steam and hot electrical appliances.

Hazardous products: medication, household cleaners and other products

Each year, several thousand children between the ages of 1 and 5 are poisoned in Quebec. They have swallowed a toxic product, their eyes or skin have been exposed to such a product or they have inhaled fumes from it. These products are found everywhere: in the home, in schools and in parks.

A number of common products are toxic for children, for example vitamins and cold medicines, cleaning products, fuel, plants, mushrooms and pesticides, nail polish remover, hair remover lotion, and hair dye. These products are found in kitchen cupboards, in the bathroom, in the bedroom, in the garage and even in your purse.

To prevent poisoning

- Keep toxic products out of the sight and reach of children.
- Store the products in cupboards or drawers with safety latches or in inaccessible places.
- Never leave medicine on the changing table or near the baby's bed.
- Keep handy the telephone number of the Centre antipoison du Québec:
1 800 463-5060.

Other simple measures can help reduce the risk of poisoning among children.

- When you purchase medicine and dangerous products, choose containers with safety caps, although such caps are not 100% effective.
- Store the products in their original containers.
- Avoid transferring dangerous products to food containers, for example putting gasoline in a soft drink can.
- Keep ashtrays and alcoholic beverages out of reach.
- To avoid overdoses, carefully read the instructions on medication before giving it to your child or consult your pharmacist.
- Keep diaper bags and handbags out of your child's reach.
- When you are visiting other people, make a quick inspection to ensure your child's safety.

The Centre antipoison du Québec (see “Useful addresses,” page 440) has published several brochures on preventing poisoning. To obtain additional information, consult its Web site (www.csssdc.qc.ca/services/capq.php).

In case of a chemical splatter in the eye

If a chemical gets into your child’s eye, rinse immediately with warm water while keeping the eye open for 10-15 minutes. Then call the Centre antipoison du Québec who will advise you whether or not to go to the doctor.

Plants

The leaves and fruits of many indoor and outdoor plants are toxic and can cause skin irritation, swelling, difficulty in swallowing, dryness of the mouth, diarrhea, vomiting and hallucinations. **As soon as your baby starts to crawl or walk, keep such plants out of her reach, give them away or discard them.**

You can obtain a list of toxic plants from the Centre antipoison du Québec (see “Useful addresses,” page 462).

PREVENTION • HEALTH



Danger



Warning



Caution



Poison



Flammable



Explosive



Corrosive



Have fun -
and stay safe!

