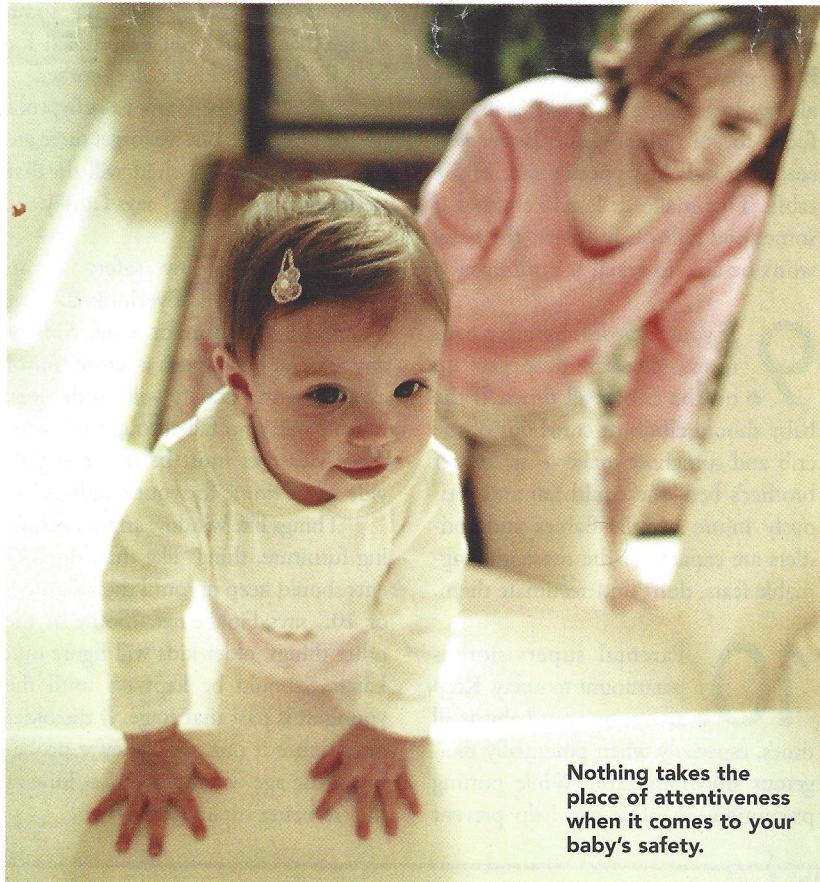


new baby safety

12 tips to keep your baby and toddler safe

by michelle sussman



Nothing takes the place of attentiveness when it comes to your baby's safety.

Your child is no longer a toddler. In fact he has grown considerably in the past year not only physically, but also developmentally. He knows how to use stools to reach the sink for hand washing, how to operate small machines, like the remote control and not to put toys in his mouth.

Take pride in his accomplishments, but don't forget that with a new baby on the way, your home still needs to be babyproofed. According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, more children age 14 and under are killed by unintentional accidents in the United States than any other injury. While advances in babyproofing have helped the unintentional injury rate drop by more than 40 percent over the past 15 years, accidents still occur.

"Accidents are preventable through pre-planning," says Vicki Lansky, author of *Baby Proofing Basics*. "We have many dangers in our homes and in our sophisticated world and the best way to prevent accidents is to plan for them."

With careful preparation and continued vigilance, you can keep your older child happy and your new baby safe.

1. Call a professional babyproofers. Trained by the two co-founders of the International Association for Child Safety, Kimberly Finkbeiner of Babyproofing Pittsburgh has spent the past four years helping families determine their babyproofing needs. Not only can she recommend products specifically for your home, but she also offers sound advice on educating an older sibling.

"You have to work with the older child for the sake of the safety of the youngest," says Finkbeiner. "Educate them on what they can do to help out and many will rise to the occasion."

2. Create a space in your family room for your older child's big toys. Many kids will play with toys that are safe for children under the age of 3 for many years. Your children will learn to share and find common interests in toys that are appropriate for both of them.

Before Jeannie Justie of Arlington Heights, Ill., gave birth to her second child, Lilly, babyproofing was a big concern. Her son, Ben, was soon to turn 3, and his many toys were scattered about the house.

"I was concerned about Lilly being around small, little toys she could put in her mouth," says Justie. "Anything Ben didn't want Lilly to have or that we thought was unsafe, he kept in his room."

3. Don't keep toys with small parts away from your older kids; just contain them properly when they aren't being used.

"With small toys and so forth, I always encourage parents to have >

plastic containers to keep the small toys in," says Finkbeiner.

4. Speak frankly to your older child about safety for the baby and illustrate how he can help. Appeal to his new "big boy" status, giving him the responsibility of cleaning up his toys. Explain how the baby could choke if she got hold of a small toy. Give him an empty toilet paper roll and teach him that any toy that fits inside the roll is too small for his new baby sister.

5. Toilet training your older child is a task that requires patience, time and fast accessibility to the toilet. But many experts recommend toilet locks to prevent little ones from drowning. Take your older child shopping with you and let them try out the toilet locks at the store. Buy the lock that he can use with ease.

Place covers on bathroom door-knobs to keep little ones out. Teach your older child how to grip and turn, but remind them to always close the door whether entering or leaving the bathroom.

6. Having a helper in the kitchen is great! It saves time on food preparation when your older child stands on a stool and helps you mix, pour and measure your ingredients. But the stool poses a hazard to the baby. Store it in a latched cabinet or in your pantry.

7. Save your child from a dangerous fall with gates. They keep your baby off the stairs and out of restricted rooms, but your older child may need easier access to the upstairs. Some gate latches are easy for kids to operate. Teach them the proper way to latch and pressurize the gate. If the gates are too difficult for a smaller child to handle, alternatives must be explored.

"You can always momentarily place the smaller child in a playpen," says

Lansky. "It's a good way of containing the younger child when you need to open gates for the older child."

8. Kids love to eat grapes, peanut butter and hot dogs. While these can be quick meals to prepare, you must keep their food separate from the baby. Make sure your baby is secured in her own high chair before presenting these allergy-inducing and choking hazard foods to your older child. Better yet, seat your kids on opposite ends of the table. This makes it less likely that if some food falls off his plate, the baby won't be able to reach it unnoticed.

9. If your kids are sharing a bedroom, keep the drop gate up on the crib at all times. If the baby should climb or crawl out of the crib and somehow make it up on her brother's bed, she could fall and seriously injure herself. Babies and toddlers are capable of the most unimaginable feats, don't underestimate them.


10. Parental supervision is paramount to safety. Keep an eye on your baby at all times, especially when potentially dangerous situations exist. While putting precautions in place can help prevent

accidents, nothing is better than good, old-fashioned attentiveness.

11. Babyproofing is necessary when you're expecting a new baby, and even though your older child might be past the stage of gated stairs, choking hazards and constant supervision, there are some things that should still be proofed for both the baby and her older brother.

"Sometimes we know to babyproof for the little kids, but we forget there are things that an older child will do that we think they are past," says Lansky.

12. Window safety is an often overlooked, but important issue. Kids of any age can easily push a screen out of a window and gravity will do the rest, causing them to fall through the window. Measures must be taken to provide a safe home for your children.

"Things like window safety, anchoring furniture, things like that, the parents should keep up until the kids are 9 or 10," says Finkbeiner. "Some of the other things, older kids will figure out. Latches should be kept on until the youngest is past that stage. If the older ones figure it out, then they're probably at the age where it's OK as long as they're being supervised." 



How to find a babyproofer in your area

While there is no national standard or certification process for professional babyproofers, there are plenty of measures you can take to ensure yours is qualified.

1. Start by asking friends and family for references. See what has been done in their homes and if they feel it is effective.
2. Visit the International Association for Child Safety on the Web at www.iafcs.org. It provides a listing of members across the country and a few from other countries.
3. Once you contact a proofer, ask them about their qualifications, where they received their training and for references.