



ouch-proof your baby

Sure, accidents happen. But that's not how you would like to console yourself if your little squirmer puts a toxic med into his mouth or trips over sharp-edged furniture. Here are tips to keep Sweetie safe. by **SASWATI SARKAR**

"IT was a Sunday noon. Five minutes after I pulled a lunch plate out of the microwave, my husband walked over to get it, holding our 5-month-old son, Rehaan," recalls Ayesha Tiwari, a mother of two in Bengaluru. "As soon as he picked the plate up, Rehaan grabbed his food. It was hot, of course, and he started screaming." Though a burn caused by hot food or drinks isn't

usually serious, it can be painful. As for Rehaan, a 20-minute cool compress soothed him.

Your munchkin is a curious customer. He will explore and, in the process, may stick his finger in harmful places and objects, put the wrong stuff into his mouth or get himself injured in some way or the other. Here is an all-day plan to keep injuries and hazards at bay.

➔ in the cot

This is where Baby will spend the maximum time. So make sure that she doesn't run the risk of a crib injury. Shalini Ahuja Agarwal, CEO, Safe Baby, a child safety products and services company in Mumbai suggests essential measures you can take.

● Do not keep stuffed toys or heavy blankets in the crib.

- Place the crib away from the window and cords.
- There should not be more than a finger's gap between the mattress and the crib. This keeps the baby from getting caught between the mattress and the crib sides. The sheets should be well-fitted.
- The space between crib slats should be less than 6 cm.
- See if all the crib hardware is tightened securely.
- Check that the crib's drop-side latches hold the sides up securely and can't be lowered by the baby or released by accident.
- Make sure that when the crib sides are lowered, they are at least 9 inches above the mattress support to keep your baby from falling out.
- Once the infant is able to stand, the mattress should be adjusted to the lowest position.

➔ in the sling

An infant cannot control his head movement due to weak neck muscles. So in case the sling's fabric presses against his nose, he cannot move away which may lead to suffocation. Also, a sling keeps the baby curled with his chin bent towards the chest. This can restrict his airways, limit oxygen supply, and suffocate him. Protect him.

- Make sure the crib fabric is tucked away from your infant's face. You should be able to see his face always. Check frequently to see if he is fine.
- If you're nursing him in a sling, change his position after feeding so his head is facing up and clear of both the sling and your body.
- Check if there is a space of at least a finger's width between your baby's chin and his chest, allowing him to breathe easily.
- A sling, if correctly used, should mimic how you would hold your baby in your arms. Ensure that

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he is snugly resting against your chest, and his head is close enough for you to see his face clearly.

- Tug the seat gently to make sure that all straps, buckles, clips, and belts are durable and in good working order.
- Since your tiny tot is lying cocooned in her sling, next to your body, she may become too warm or even dehydrated. So keep an eye on her temperature and adjust her clothing to ensure she is comfortable.

➔ during tub time

Your sweetheart loves splashing in the water? Follow some guidelines to make bath time fun as well as safe for her.

- Never leave your baby alone in the bath, even for a second. And for those crisis situations, learn the technique of infant CPR.
- Check the temperature of the water before putting Baby into it. Do a "touch test" by dipping your hand in the water.
- Always place an anti-skid mat beneath your baby's tub to prevent it from slipping.
- For newborns and babies up to 6 months old, fill the bath to just about the level of their navel or belly button. Never fill the bath more than waist-high (in a sitting position), even for older babies.
- Empty the tub completely, immediately after each use.

Remember, a baby can drown in as little as 1 inch of water.

➔ in the car

According to www.babycentre.in, a car seat weighing 10 kg is ideal for an infant up to 9 months of age. It should weigh around 13 kg when used by a toddler. There are some more points you should take care of, to drive safe.

- Never carry your infant in your lap while in the car.
- Do not put your baby on the front seat, especially if it has airbags.
- "Use child locks so that your child cannot open the back door from inside while you are driving," says Agarwal.
- Use a rear-facing car seat till she is 1 year of age and a front-facing one after that.

➔ while she nibbles

Ever thought that the 'healthy' food that you religiously feed your toddler can harm his health? These suggestions will help you serve him 'safe' food.

- Make sure that you reduce the amount of pesticides from fruits by peeling them, and from veggies like lettuce and cabbage by removing their outer leaves.
- Scrub all the fruits and vegetables that you don't peel under running water.
- Consider buying organic and locally-grown produce.
- "Do not give your child raw/fresh honey. Pasteurized honey from a recognized brand should be given to avoid botulism—a disease caused by toxic bacteria," says Neelanjana Singh, Delhi-based nutritionist and author of *Our Kid Eats Everything*.
- "Serve eggs hard-boiled, not half-boiled. This will prevent salmonella (bacteria) infection," she says.
- Do not store any food at room



temperature for long. Bacteria may accumulate to alarming levels and form heat-resistant toxins that cannot be killed by cooking.

● “Giving your child a glass of microwave-heated milk can damage her teeth. This is because hot spots are formed in the milk due to uneven heating temperature of the microwave. Warm the milk on a gas stove or an electric heater where the heating temperature is uniform,” says Singh.

➔ when he trots

The risk of injuries and intoxication multiplies as your little munchkin starts to move around the house. Take precautions.

- Keep hot food and drinks at the centre of tables and counters, not on the edges.
- Turn handles of pans towards the back of the gas stove.
- Block Baby’s access to appliances like gas cylinder, electric heaters,

toasters, and the like. And keep them unplugged when not in use.

- Hide electrical cords and tall, unstable lamps behind the furniture. Ensure the electrical cords attached to the lamps are out of baby’s reach too.
- Attach corner and edge guards to sharp-edged furniture.
- Install safety gates to block stairways at both ends.
- Install doorstops to protect your baby’s fingers.
- Never leave your tiny tot alone

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on beds, in a bouncy or a high chair, or in any other spot where she can fall from.

- Keep knives, breakables, heavy pans, and other dangerous items out of reach.
- Keep the rubbish bins in inaccessible cupboards.
- “Keep medicines away from the reach of infants, preferably in a closed cabinet,” says Dr. VV Pillay, Chief, Poison Control Centre & Clinical Forensic Medicine Unit, Kochi.
- Keep batteries out of their reach to avoid lead intoxication.
- “Do not keep cleaning agents or domestic pesticides at the floor level or on low shelves in the kitchen, bathroom, etc. They must be stored out of sight in a locked store room or a closet,” he says.
- “Do not allow infants or children to play with cosmetics. While many of these are relatively non-toxic, some can be quite harmful, for example, nail polish remover,” says Dr. Pillai.
- It’s best to get rid of toxic houseplants such as philodendron.

➔ as she plays

Love to see your cutie have fun with her toys? They can be dangerous if you are not careful. Look for BPA-free versions. Agarwal shares a few more useful tips.

- Buy age-appropriate toys for your little one and make sure they don’t have small parts that pose a choking hazard.
- Be very careful of toy batteries, especially button batteries. If your child has swallowed a battery, rush to the hospital.
- Toys with strings can be dangerous. If the string is more than six inches long, it can pose a strangulation hazard.
- Ensure that the dolls and toys have eyes and nose fixed and cannot be pulled out by the child. ●