Preparing for Baby

Safety Tips for Newborns
Congratulations! There is or soon will be a new baby in your life.

Life with an infant can be hectic and wonderful. Even before baby arrives, you are given so much information on how to keep them healthy and well fed. The purpose of this booklet is to help you create a safe environment to reduce the risk of injuries for your entire family.

If you have questions, we are always available to you as a resource.

Sincerely,
The Safe Kids Vermont Coalition

UVMHealth.org/SafeKidsVT
VTSafeKids@UVMHealth.org
For parents, grandparents, and other caregivers
2021 Edition
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Getting Ready
Baby Registry
THE INSIDE SAFETY SCOOP

Every pregnancy is unique and different and so are the registries parents will make to fit their lifestyles. When it comes to choosing the products for your family, it can be tricky to distinguish which products are not recommended despite their advertising claiming safety. In fact, there are so many products on the market for infants and newborns, some of the simple items that can keep you and your newborn safe are easy to miss. Check out our lists for what to get and what to avoid as you start building your registry list.

What to Get
CONSIDER FOR YOUR LIST

- Wearable Blankets and Sleep Sacks. These cute products can keep a sleeping baby warm through a Northeast winter without the risks that come from loose bedding like quilts, comforters or blankets.

- Bath Thermometer. These simple devices can give you peace of mind that the bath water isn’t too hot or too cold, but just right for baby.

- Baby Gates. These are a multipurpose item! They can keep your exploring baby from falling down the stairs (make sure to use hardware mounted for tops of the stairs) and help separate spaces to manage where baby or pets are during the day.

- Stroller Reflectors or Lights. While not a commonly seen item, there is nothing like giving you and your baby more visibility when out walking around your neighborhood.

- Baby First Aid Kit. Whether premade or DIY assembly, having a quick way to grab the tools needed to treat the inevitable minor injuries and illnesses is important.
What to Avoid
CONSIDER SKIPPING THESE

- Car Seat Accessories. From inserts for inside the carrier to mats that protect your vehicle seats to toys that hang from the carrier, it’s best to skip them all. Toys and mirrors can become projectiles aimed at your child’s face during a crash. Mats and inserts are not allowed by most car seat manufacturers because they reduce the safety of the car seat.

- Rocking sleepers. They have been linked to infant deaths when children roll from their back to their stomach if unrestrained or strangulation if improperly buckled.

- Baby Nests or Positioners. The soft, plush materials are also a suffocation risk. They should not be used for unsupervised sleep, either in or outside of a crib.

- Bolsters and Wedge Positioners. These products come in a variety of shapes, but they all pose a suffocation risk if a child rolls or moves and can trap babies if too close to the sides of their sleep area.

- Crib hammocks and weighted blankets. Both of these items have not been tested and the American Academy of Pediatrics warns against using untested products for your baby.

- Crib bumpers. There have been movements to ban these products due to their risk of suffocation as well as other safety concerns.
While You’re Pregnant
Recommendations for Drivers and Passengers

Buckling up through all stages of your pregnancy is the single most effective action you can take to protect yourself and your unborn child in a crash.

HOW TO WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT

- Position the shoulder belt away from your neck and across your chest.
- Place the lap belt below your belly so that it fits snugly across your hips and pelvic bone.
- Wear a seat belt even if your vehicle has air bags.
- Do not turn off the air bags.

ADJUST YOUR SEAT

- Choose a comfortable, upright position, minimizing the gap between your shoulder and the seat belt.
- Move your seat back as far as possible from the steering wheel or dashboard, making sure you can comfortably reach the steering wheel and pedals when driving.

IF YOU ARE IN A CRASH

- Seek immediate medical attention even if you think you are not injured.
Picking Out a Car Seat

With so many brands and features, it can be difficult to choose the best rear facing car seat for your needs.

When you’ve narrowed down to a few options, take a moment to read over your vehicle’s instruction manual. Not all vehicles and car seats are compatible for all of their features. For instance, trucks with in-floor storage cannot support a car seat load leg. If you are excited for LATCH install, check to see what positions in your vehicle offer LATCH and if they match with what the car seat allows.

REAR-FACING CAR SEAT STYLES

These are the types of rear-facing seats currently available in the US:

**Infant Rear-facing Only:** The benefits of this type of car seat are that it’s portable and usually fits newborns, and vehicles, well. Most infants outgrow this style by their first birthday.

**Convertibles and All-in-Ones:** The benefit of these types of car seat are that they can change from rear-facing to forward-facing and grow with your child. They have a higher weight limit, to allow your child to ride rear facing longer. These seats do not have a carrier like the Infant Rear-facing model. While many convertibles and All-in-Ones fit newborns well, some may not. The seat may also take up a lot of room in a vehicle, because of recline needed for a newborn.

For more information on rear facing car seat styles, visit [UVMHealth.org/CarSeats](http://UVMHealth.org/CarSeats) or check out the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) website at [HealthyChildren.org](http://HealthyChildren.org) for their Car Seat Product Listings.
Lead Poisoning Prevention

PROTECT YOUR FAMILY FROM LEAD PAINT HAZARDS

Children living in homes built before 1978 are at a greater risk for lead poisoning because lead paint was widely used in these homes. Children can be lead poisoned by ingesting lead dust, eating paint chips, or by chewing on surfaces painted with lead-based paint. As we know, children put everything in their mouths!

Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal. Lead-based paint in and around your home can be a serious health issue. Too much lead in the body can cause serious and lifelong health problems for anyone, but pregnant individuals and children under age 6 are especially at risk because their bodies absorb higher amounts of lead.

Lead-based paint hazards found in paint chips, dust, and soil in and around your home can be dangerous if not in good condition. Opening and closing windows and doors painted with lead-based paint creates invisible dust. Regular cleaning of certain areas in your home will help keep your family healthy and safe from lead dust.

Vermont law requires all children ages 1 & 2 to have their blood lead level tested. If you think your child has been exposed to lead (no matter their age), contact your child’s health care provider to schedule a test. The only way to tell if your child has an elevated level is with a simple blood test.

The Vermont Lead Law requires property owners of pre-1978 homes and owners of child-care facilities to complete yearly inspections on their properties to help prevent children from being exposed to lead-based paint hazards.
Preventing Lead Exposure

TIPS FOR CLEANING YOUR HOME

If you are concerned there may be lead paint in your home, follow these cleaning tips to reduce the health impact on your family.

- Always wash your children’s hands prior to napping and eating.
- Wash dropped pacifiers and teething toys before giving back to children.
- Clean floors, toys, toy boxes, pacifiers, tables, and areas where food is often eaten or prepared daily.
- Window sills, window wells, tops of baseboards, and any other trim detail or furniture where dust collects should be cleaned weekly. Preferably, with gloved hands.
- Pick-up and throw away any visible paint chips in child accessible areas immediately; remember to wash your hands afterwards.
- Use disposable single-use cleaning materials to avoid spreading lead dust to other areas; replace mop pads, sponges, and rags frequently.
- Use wet mops instead of dry sweeping (which moves lead dust around rather than removing it), and a HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) vacuum (which differs from a regular vacuum in that they contain finer filters) if available. If you do not own a HEPA vacuum, borrow one from the Burlington Lead Program for free!

Call 802-865-5323
E-mail blp@burlingtonvt.gov
Visit burlingtonvt.gov/blp
Reducing Home Fire Risks
FIRE SAFETY ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Learn how to keep your home fire safe before you bring your baby home. What parents don't always recognize are the hidden dangers lurking inside seemingly harmless items. When preparing your home for your baby, don't forget a few basic safety measures.

Be “Alarmed”

- Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement. Larger homes may require additional smoke alarms to provide a minimum level of protection.

- Install Carbon Monoxide alarms outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, and in other locations as required by laws, codes, or standards.

- Test smoke & CO alarms at least once a month using the test button.

- Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.

- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for cleaning to keep smoke & CO alarms working.

- Replace all alarms when they are 10 years old.
Have an Escape Plan

- Make a home escape plan. Draw a map of each level of the home. Show all doors and windows. Practice the plan with everyone in your home.

- Plan to wake babies and very young children and help them get out. In your plan, talk about who will help each child get out safely.

- Know at least two ways out of every room, if possible. Make sure all doors and windows that lead outside open.

- Have an outside meeting place (something permanent, like a tree, light pole, or mailbox) a safe distance in front of the home where firefighters will easily find you.

Keep Children Safe from Fire and Burns

- Keep children 3 feet away from anything that can get hot. Space heaters, grills, and stovetops can cause terrible burns.

- Place items so they cannot be pulled down or knocked over. Keep appliance cords coiled and away from counter edges.

- Keep smoking materials locked up in a high place. Never leave cigarette lighters or matches where children can reach them.

- Never hold a child while you are cooking, drinking a hot liquid, or carrying hot foods or liquids.
On the Road
Child Passenger Safety
REAR FACING CAR SEATS

A properly installed rear-facing car seat provides the best protection for your new baby and through their toddler years. Here are some general tips about the installation and use of rear-facing car seats. Always read the car seat and vehicle owner’s manuals for specifics.

CAR SEAT INSTALLATION

- Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active airbag.
- Use the seat belt or the lower anchors, not both.
- For seat belt installation, the belt must be locked.
- The seat should move less than 1 inch at the belt path.
- Newborns should ride at the maximum allowable recline.

HARNESSING YOUR CHILD

- Route harness straps through the car seat at or below the baby’s shoulders.
- Harness straps should be snug—you should not be able to pinch any of the harness webbing (fabric) at the baby’s shoulders. Check out this Safe Kids pinch test video at youtube.com/watch?v=44HT8prdjHg.

- No bundlers, puffy jackets, snowsuits, or bulky clothes. Cover baby with a blanket after harnessing.
- Do not use products such as inserts and harness covers unless they came with the car seat. They may affect harness fit or cause your baby’s head to be positioned incorrectly.
Child Passenger Safety

CLEANING A CAR SEAT

- To clean a car seat, use mild soap. Do not use bleach, disinfecting sprays, solvents, abrasive cleaners or even “natural” cleaning agents, like lemon juice or vinegar.
- Washing covers by hand and air or towel drying is usually okay.
- The harness straps and buckle strap should be surface cleaned only (not immersed in water). Some harness straps can be removed for “spot cleaning,” but others should not be. Do not iron.

OTHER TIPS

- Register your car seat with the manufacturer and check for recalls.
- If considering a second hand seat, be sure you know its history and that it has not expired.
- Do not use a car seat as a sleeping area outside of a vehicle. Never leave a child in a car seat with unbuckled or partially buckled straps.
- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle. Create reminders so you check the back seat when you get out of the car. Keep your vehicle locked when you’re not in it. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911.
- Keep children rear-facing until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
- Set a good example: Always buckle up.

See www.uvmhealth.org/carseats for more information about how to keep your child safe in the car.

Have your seat checked by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician!
To find a fitting station near you check out the following websites:

Vermont: www.BeSeatSmart.org
On the Go
TRANSPORTING BABY

Between doctors appointments and family outings, baby will have plenty of time exploring the world with you. Baby has a few options on how to travel, and here are some tips to be safe no matter what way you choose!

BABY CARRIERS

- Always place the carrier on a hard surface, like the floor. Soft surfaces, like couches and beds, can cause the carrier to tip causing injuries or suffocation risks to baby.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for securing baby to avoid a strangulation or fall hazard.
- Focusing on carrying the carrier and not juggling other items, especially on the stairs to reduce risk of trips and falls.
- Keep carriers off of shopping carts. According to the AAP, around 23,000 children are treated for injuries from shopping carts each year.

BABY WEARING

- Before baby wearing, familiarize yourself with T.I.C.K.S.
- Avoid hot drinks while baby wearing. If you have to have your coffee, think about using a travel mug or straw to reduce risk of spilling and burning the baby.
BABY WEARING CONTINUED

- Regularly check for wear and tear, especially around buckles and stitching.
- If you have to pick something up, bend at the knee, not the hip, and support baby constantly with one hand.

STROLLERS

- Avoid hanging bags or items from the handles of the stroller. It can cause it to tip backwards.
- Always fully set up or fold the stroller before letting your child near it to avoid pinched fingers and other injuries.
- Use the sidewalk when possible, and walk facing traffic when it isn’t.
- Consider increasing the visibility of the stroller with reflective tape or lights for early morning or evening walks.

OTHER TIPS

Baby walkers make baby get and up and go which means even with close supervision, kids can get seriously injured fast. Canada has banned the manufacturing and sale of baby walkers and the American Academy of Pediatrics has called for a ban on the manufacture and sale of baby walkers with wheels.

Stationary activity centers and playpens are a safer alternative to baby walkers.
At Play
Instill a Lifelong Love of Water

WHILE KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

The world is 71% water and your child is 100% curious! Safety around water begins with adult supervision. Drowning can happen in seconds and be silent. For infants who do not have much neck and muscle control, 1 inch of water can be deadly. Be sure to never leave your baby alone near water OR in the care of another young child.

AS YOUR CHILD GROWS

- Ensure that swimming pools are secured with barriers such as a 4 foot fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate.
- Be mindful of the water temperature – Is it too cold in the lake?
- When using an inflatable/portable pool, empty immediately after use and store upside down out of children’s reach.
- Use only Coast Guard Approved Flotation. Avoid inflatable swimming aids such as “floaties.” They are not a substitute for approved life jackets and can give children & parents a false sense of security.
- Choose a Water Watcher – when several adults are present, choose one to be solely responsible for watching children in the water.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs around the water, especially when supervising others.
- Drowning is often silent. Avoid distractions when your child is around water by putting away phones, having prolonged conversations, or multi-tasking.
- Require your child to swim within designated areas that are within sight of certified lifeguards and guardians.
Teach Them Early

Every child is different, so enrolling them in swim lessons to get comfortable and gain confidence in the water early is critical. Register for swim lessons and teach them about water safety. Many facilities offer lessons beginning at 6 months old.

Water survival skills training through swim lessons can help reduce drowning for children between the ages of 1-4. Classes will introduce parents and children to good habits and start building swim readiness skills such as back floating and breath control while faces are in the water.

Consider working with children who are older, in and out of swim lessons, on these 5 Water Survival Skills:

- Jumping into water over their head and returning to the surface
- Moving from a position on their stomach to their backs and back to stomach
- Floating & Treading Water
- Breathing with forward movement in the water towards safety
- How to exit the water

GET CERTIFIED

Become certified in infant & child 1st Aid and CPR. All caregivers should know how to provide emergency help. This will protect your entire family. You can often find these programs at your local YMCA, Parks & Recreation Department, hospital, or fire station.

Contributed by Jess Lukas, Aquatics Director Greater Burlington YMCA
Keep Yourself Safe
TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS

Unintentional injuries can cause unnecessary complications during pregnancy. Studies have shown that the two leading causes of unintentional injury during pregnancy are car crashes (which is why it’s important to properly wear your seatbelt!) and falls.

The truth is pregnancy shifts your center of gravity, which can make it harder to stay upright and balanced, especially on uneven surfaces. Even hormones during pregnancy can impact your joints, making them looser which can translate into ‘clumsy.’ Add on top of that the exhaustion, the unexpected symptoms and stress, and trying to get everything done before baby arrives, and you have increased risks for accidental trips and falls.

Fortunately, there are a few ways to help reduce your risk!

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- Check the treads on your shoes. You want to make sure they have some texture and aren’t worn smooth.
- Check your shoe size! If your shoe size has changed over the course of the pregnancy, your shoes may now be too small. Shoes that are too small or too loose can increase your risk for trips and falls.
- Skip the socks (unless they have grips) and wear rubber soled slippers around the house.
- Flat shoes with good arch support are great, especially for uneven or unpredictable surfaces, like trails or yards.

EXERCISES

- The risk of injury from exercising is low. In fact, exercising may help reduce your risk of falling while pregnant.
- Choose exercises that focus on balance and strength or are designed specifically for pregnant individuals.
Falls Prevention
AROUND THE HOUSE
- Stairs are a common location of falls. Keep the stairs cleared of clutter.
- If you have a wooden staircase, check out treads or nonslip sprays that can increase traction.
- Always hold on to the railing when going up or down stairs.
- Check your rugs to make sure they have non-slip backs or non-slip tape to keep the edges down.
- Use a nonslip bath mat in the tub or get some cute nonslip stickers.
- Keep the electrical cords tucked away against the wall or behind furniture.

TALK TO A MEDICAL PROVIDER
- If you have concerns about feeling dizzy or off balance, you may have an underlying condition that can increase your risk of falling.
  - Stay hydrated. When you are dehydrated, you increase your risk for dizziness.
  - If you do fall, contact your medical provider. If you have abdominal pain or bleeding, seek emergency care right away.
Babies and Pets
HOW TO PREPARE

There is nothing as cute as pets and babies bonding together, but you may be worried or anxious about how your pets will feel about a baby joining the household. Here are a few tips to make the transition a bit easier.

Start Early

- Review your pets’ behaviors and focus on training good behaviors. Things like jumping and barking are easier to work on before bringing baby home.
- Unpack baby furniture and gear as early as possible to give your pets time to adjust.
- Simulate new behaviors like walking around with a doll or rolled up blanket while interacting with your pets or play sound clips of babies crying.

Coming Home

- Have your pets sniff baby’s blanket before bringing baby inside.
- Have a designated kid free spot that your pets can retreat to when they feel overwhelmed. It can be a pet bed, crate, or something similar.
- To prevent jealousy, set aside some hangout time with your pets.
- Always supervise interactions between baby and your pets. Even the sweetest pet can accidentally hurt a child when excited or distracted.
While Pregnant

**TOXOPLASMOSIS**

While the risk of infection is low, cats can carry a parasite you can be exposed to through their litter boxes. If you’ve owned cats for a while, you might already have immunity. You can ask your doctor to test for immunity through a blood test or reduce your risk of exposure by having someone else scoop the litter until after the baby is born.

**Talk to the Vet**

**VACCINES**

Your pets’ vet can help make sure they are up-to-date on their vaccines and medications. From rabies to fleas, preventative care can keep your pet safe and your child healthy.

**Wash Your Hands**

**AFTER PLAY OR CLEANING**

Infants and children under the age of 5 are more like to get sick from germs that animals can carry according to the CDC. From cats and dogs to reptiles and hamsters, it’s important to develop habits of washing your hands after playing, feeding, or cleaning up after pets. Always wash your hands before breastfeeding or preparing formula.
At Home
Safe Sleep for Babies

ABC’S: ALONE, BACK, CRIB

The UVM Children’s Hospital is a Cribs for Kids site, so safe sleep will be modeled for you and your infant by the postpartum nurses and medical providers on the floor.

The key principles of Safe Sleep are as follows:

- Your baby should be placed to sleep on their back in a safety-approved crib on a firm mattress every time during naps and at nighttime.
- Remove all loose bedding, comforters, quilts, sheepskins, stuffed animals, bumpers, wedges, and pillows from your baby’s crib.
- Your baby should not sleep with others in a bed, on a couch, or in a chair.
- Keep your baby’s sleep area close but separate from where others sleep.

The principles of Safe Sleep have changed over the years, so be sure to review them with any friends or family members that may watch the baby or put them to bed, whether for a nap or for the night.
A Safe Sleep Area

**WHAT DO YOU REALLY NEED?**

Many of the products advertised to parents are not only unnecessary, but completely unsafe! Crib bumpers should never be used as they increase risk of suffocation for infants.

So what should be on your shopping list?

- A crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard that has a flat sleep area that meets current safety guidelines
- A firm crib mattress
- A fitted sheet

And that’s it!

Blankets, stuffed animals, and mattress toppers are all **unsafe** to have in an infants sleep area.

Hand-Me-Downs

**IS SECOND HAND WORTH THE RISK?**

Your parents may still have the crib from when you were born, but it doesn’t meet updated safety standards. If you want to keep it, you can repurpose it into a stuff animal holder or something similar for when your child is older. As an infant, you want to make sure they sleep in a bassinet or crib that meets all of the current Federal safety standards.

Now if you have a friend or family member that wants to gift you a bassinet or crib that they purchased and used for their own child in recent years, you may be tempted to say yes. Before you officially accept, look up the manufacturer and model to ensure that there were no recalls for the product and that is it CPSC approved. For instance, inclined sleepers were recalled after being associated with infant fatalities. If it is not recalled and up to current safety standards, still double check for any loose or missing hardware that could make it unsafe for your child.
Child-Proofing

WHEN TO START

While it can be six to ten months before baby is crawling and moving around the house, it is easier to start child-proofing before baby arrives or gets close to being independent. The first thing you want to do is get down on the level of an infant. From this point of view, you can survey your house for its unique risks and dangers. Do you have breakable decorations in easy reach that need to be moved to higher shelves? Do you see any tiny objects that could be a choking hazard if swallowed?

Once you have an idea of your space, make a list of the potential dangers you want to correct before baby finds them. Some of your childproofing may be accomplished by rearranging your home, but for some of it you may need special equipment, like safety gates, cabinet locks, or outlet covers. Knowing what and how much of each item you will need to baby proof early means you can add them to registry and use those completion discounts.

How you child-proof will also depend on if you are owning or renting, and if you are allowed to drill into the walls or cabinets. There are many styles of safety equipment that will allow you to find one that helps child-proof your space without giving up your deposit. Before you start purchasing and installing your safety equipment, you should talk to your landlord about your safety concerns in the space. They may help in providing safer options or give permission to drill into the walls specifically for child-proofing.
Furniture Tip Over

STRAPS AND ANCHORS

From televisions to dressers and bookshelves, it’s important to connect tippable furniture and large electronics to the walls or to the piece of furniture they are on with an anchor or strap.

Children climbing or reaching on furniture and objects can have enough wait to cause a tip over. Tip overs can result in serious injuries and even death.

Stairs

BABY GATES

Baby gates are an important tool for preventing baby from tumbling down the stairs, but they are also great for keeping them out of rooms that aren’t infant friendly.

For rooms and the bottom of the stairs, pressure mounted gates are great. For the top of the stairs, you want a hard-mounted, or screw installed gate.

Windows

CORDS AND LOCKS

Moving furniture (especially cribs!) away from windows is a great place to start.

Next, check if the window coverings have long cords or loops. If they do, replace, cut, or secure them to the wall to prevent strangulation.

To prevent falls out the window, place locks or guards that don’t allow the window to open more than 4 inches, which is a smaller opening than most infants heads.
Water in the Home

PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL DROWNINGS

Be sure to never leave your baby alone near water OR in the care of another young child – especially in the bathtub! Most child drownings in the home occur in the bathtub and more than half of the deaths involve a child under the age of one. How do you prevent this tragedy?

- Have any bath supplies within reach so you can keep a hand on your baby at all times.
- If you have to answer the door or forgot something, bring baby with you. Even if it’ll only take a second, never leave baby in the tub.

- Infant bath seats can give a false sense of security to parents and caregivers and are designed as bathing aid, NOT safety devices.
- Be mindful of the water temperature. Babies have thin skin and can be burned at lower temperatures than adults. To prevent serious burns or chills, aim for bathwater for be about 100° F by doing the elbow test or by using a bath thermometer.
BATHROOMS
• Install a latch or doorknob cover on bathroom doors to avoid infants from getting in without supervision.
• Put toilet lids down and install safety latches or locks to keep them from being lifted up.
• Depending on the style of your tub, consider keeping the drain plug outside of the tub and out of reach of your child so if they turn the faucet on, the tub won’t fill with water.

YARDS AND GARDENS
• Empty all buckets, large water bowls, recycling bins, and coolers of any water immediately after you are done using them.
• When not in use, close any buckets and pails used for cleaning or painting with a secured lid.
• Identify water hazards in your yard such as wells, drainage ditches, or ponds and consider how to block your child from reaching them.

POOLS AND HOT TUBS
• Drowning is often silent. Avoid distractions when your child is around water by putting away phones, having prolonged conversations, or multi-tasking.
• Depending when your pool was installed, find out if your drains and other suction are fitted with anti-entrapment covers or safety vacuum-release systems.
• A fence at least four feet tall should surround the pool or hot tub on all sides and have a self-closing, self-latching gate.
• Install a door alarm to let you know when your child access the backyard without your supervision.

Contributed by Jess Lukas, Aquatics Director Greater Burlington YMCA
Choking Hazards

AROUND THE HOME

Babies love to explore their surroundings and part of that exploration is putting anything and everything they find into their mouths. It is important when childproofing and living your day to day life to keep small objects off the floor and out of baby’s reach.

This can be incredibly difficult if you have older children in the house as their toys may be hazardous for baby. You can check the toy packaging for warnings, such as choking hazard, or for the age guidelines. If you no longer have the packaging, you can easily conduct a choke test at home. While you can purchase a choke test cylinder, a toilet paper tube is very similar in size and design. If the object or toy can fit through the toilet paper roll, that it can fit in the mouth and throat of a child under the age of 3.

Even if a toy or object passes the choke test, it’s still important to monitor what your child puts in their mouth and anything that is ‘close’ to fitting should still be stored out of reach.

This doesn’t mean the older children have to stop using their toys, it only means that it’s important to keep their toys away from baby. Try to set up separate play areas or keep baby confined in a playpen while the older child plays with those specific toys. Let the older children know that sharing is important, but sharing these specific toys with baby is dangerous.
Solid Foods

**FINGER FOODS AND PUREES**

When you start transitioning to solid food, leave out the hard foods like raw fruit, nuts, hot dogs, popcorn, and candy. Foods that are uncooked, whole, or in certain shapes can be choking hazards for infants. Cutting up food into thin, small pieces can help prevent choking. Additionally, cooking foods, like vegetables and fruit, longer until they can be mashed also helps to prevent choking.

Infant CPR and First Aid

**IT’S A LIFE SAVING SKILL**

If you’ve taken a CPR class before, they probably covered both adult and infant methods. If you haven’t, you can learn the skills online.

The Red Cross offers step by step directions and videos that walk you through the process for what to do for both conscious and unconscious choking.

Magnets and Button Batteries

**NOT A TOY**

Magnets, especially little high-powered ones, may not seem like a choking hazard. The real risk around magnets is they can cause serious internal injuries when they connect inside the child’s digestive track. It is best to keep large magnet sets out of the home, as it is difficult to tell if any are missing. Symptoms of ingested magnets are similar to common childhood illnesses and include abdominal pain, vomiting, and fever.

Button batteries, like those found in common household electronics, are a choking hazard and can also cause severe tissue burns when ingested or stuck in an ear or up a nose. If a child is suspected of ingesting a magnet or button battery seek emergency care as soon as possible.
Preventing Accidental Poisoning

KEEPING BABY SAFE FROM MEDICATIONS AND OTHER HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Many common items in and around your home may be poisonous, which can be a risk for an exploring baby. Mistakes made when giving a baby medication are another cause of poisonings.

The most common things babies get into while exploring are medications, vitamins and supplements, cleaning products, personal care products such as hand sanitizer and deodorant, toys and foreign objects, plants and mushrooms, and pesticides like ant traps and bug spray. Some of the most serious poisonings involve prescription pain medications, marijuana, ADHD medications, cough and cold medications, and certain foreign objects like batteries, magnets and ammunition.

It’s important to have the poison center number saved in your phone: 1-800-222-1222. The poison center is staffed by specially trained nurses and pharmacists who provide fast, expert help at no cost to you. With help from the poison center, 95% of poisonings involving young children can be treated at home.
Making Your Home Safer
TIPS FROM THE NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND POISON CENTER

Preparation and good habits can help you prevent poisonings in your home, for both children and adults. Here are some tips:

- Store all potential poisons up high, out of reach of children, in a locked cabinet if possible. Keep purses, luggage and diaper bags out of reach of children as well.
- Store non-food items separately from all food and drink.
- Put the cap back on immediately and put products away as soon as you are finished using them.
- Read the label on medications, cleaners and other products, and carefully follow the instructions each time you use them.
- When giving medication to a child, use the measuring tool provided with the medication or another marked measuring tool like a teaspoon or tablespoon. Do not use kitchen spoons.
- Do not call medication “candy.”
- Get rid of products you no longer need, such as expired medications or old pesticides, safely and promptly. Call your town office for guidance on disposal.
- Visit nnepc.org for many more safety tips and information on common potential poisons.
Parenthood and Stress
A baby brings an unlimited amount of love, joy, and happiness into your life. Unfortunately, a baby can also bring a lot of stress! Even the most patient parents can feel stress when caring for an infant who needs constant attention and care! If you feel your stress level increasing, here are some ways to cope:

HOW TO PARENT BABIES SAFELY

- Walk Away – put the baby in a safe place, like a crib, and leave the room. It’s okay to let the baby cry.
- Move Your Body – Regular exercise releases endorphins, a chemical in the brain that can improve your mood and help you feel less stressed.
- Breathe Deeply – Take slow, deep breaths to slow your heart rate and reduce tension.
- Make Time for Yourself – Keep your stress levels low by setting aside time each week to do an activity that is just for you. Whatever you enjoy, do it!
- Smile – Studies show that smiling and laughing make you feel better.
- Call a Friend – Calling a friend allows you to vent when you are frustrated.
- Ask for Help – Just ask. Friends, neighbors, relatives, and professionals are a great help when things get tough.
Nurturing Babies
9 WAYS TO SOOTHE A CRYING BABY

1. Meet the baby’s basic needs. Try feeding the baby, see if it needs a diaper change, or to be burped. Is the baby too hot or cold? Check the clothing for comfort.

2. Is the baby sick? Check the baby’s temperature. Is it 100.5 or over? Is there vomiting or diarrhea? Is so, call your doctor.

3. Hold the baby close and gently massage them.

4. Rock, walk, or dance with your baby, or try a swing or bouncy chair.

5. Sing and or talk to your baby.

6. Hold baby and breathe slowly and calmly, the baby may feel your calmness and become quiet.

7. Lower any surrounding noise or lights.

8. Call a friend or relative who is good at caring for babies and ask for help.

9. When nothing else works put the baby down in a safe place, like a crib, give yourself a break and leave the room. Check on the baby every 10-15 minutes.

Remember, no baby has ever died from crying!

For more information please visit www.pcavt.org or call 2-1-1

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
1-800-Children/ 1-800-244-5373
Visit us online at UVMHealth.org/SafeKidsVT