



TIPS

Keeping children safe at home: Falls

Preventing children's falls

Falls are the fourth leading cause of accidental child deaths in the European region for children aged 0-19. Where hospitalisation and emergency department data are available, we see that falls for children are the leading cause of admissions and emergency visits to hospital.

Although we expect a certain number of minor falls as children learn to walk, balance and climb, some falls are more dangerous. Falls can result in broken bones, fractures, concussions, and head injuries.

The good news is that there are many ways we can ensure our children can play, learn and discover safely.

Keeping your child safe

- Use properly installed, approved stair gates at the top and bottom of the stairs. Choose stair gates with vertical bars at 4-inch (10.2 cm) intervals instead of horizontal bars to prevent climbing.
- Install child resistant window guards or window stops throughout your home to prevent falls, always ensuring you can still exit the window easily in the case of an emergency.
- Keep cribs, chairs, beds, sofas and other furniture your child can climb on away from windows and balconies.
- Never leave your child alone on any high place, such as a bed, sofa, or changing table. Keep one hand on your baby while changing diapers. Ideally, change your baby on the floor.
- Do not use baby walkers. They give young children greater mobility and height before they are ready for it, which puts them at risk of dangers such as falling down stairs and hurting their heads.
- Always use the straps when putting your baby into a high chair, swing, changing table or stroller. When buying new products with harnesses, choose ones with a five-point harness, as they are more secure than three- or four-point harnesses.
- Remove fall hazards in your home such as folded carpets, electric wires or cords on

the floor. Ensure your child does not walk on wet floors.

- Keep stairs clear of tripping hazards. Ensure stairways and landings are well lit.
- Place shatter-resistant film on glass surfaces that children could fall into or replace the regular glass with shatter-resistant glass.
- Place a soft carpet beside your child's cot or bed in case your child falls out of bed.
- Use corner covers on furniture with sharp corners.
- As your child develops new skills like rolling, crawling, and climbing, keep a close watch for new hazards.
- If you have playground equipment in your backyard, use rubber, wood, bark, or sand surfacing underneath it.
- If you have a trampoline, position it away from structures, trees, concrete surfaces and other play areas. Never allow more than one person on the trampoline at a time and do not allow children to attempt somersaults. Trampolines are not suitable for very young children and toddlers. Always supervise children using a trampoline by spotting at the side of the trampoline.

What to do in an emergency

- If your child receives a head injury and is knocked unconscious call an ambulance immediately. While waiting place the unconscious child on their side with their head resting on their hand. This *recovery position* will help reduce the risk of their tongue falling back in their throat and stopping them breathing.
- Don't move an injured child after a fall if you think any bones might be broken.
- There can sometimes be a delayed reaction to a head injury even if the child appears to recover quickly, so keep a close eye on them and get medical advice if they develop pain in any area or complain of headaches, dizziness or nausea.
- Take a basic first aid course for more information about how to deal with an emergency.

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Adapted from "The Scottish Good Egg Guide to keeping