



# Risk of Injury and Stages of Development

Children are at risk for injuries. Developmental factors limit their physical, mental and emotional abilities. They grow quickly and want to test and master their environment. Their curiosity, fearlessness and lack of safety knowledge put them at risk of attempting actions for which they may lack the skills and physical capabilities. The type of injuries children may incur are related to their stage of development. For example, an infant's neck is too weak to support the weight of his head, so he will be at risk of choking. Infants and toddlers explore their surroundings by putting objects in their mouths, and therefore are at risk of choking. Toddlers like to walk fast, climb and reach for objects, and therefore are at risk of falling or poisoning. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of injury in all age groups.

As child care providers, we want to assure that children are challenged by their environment and can explore safely. Knowing the children in your care and being careful to remove hazards and set up the environment with their abilities in mind can prevent injuries, because each child develops at their own rate and not according to any exact age, the examples below are only a framework. One child may crawl at six months, another at one year.

Age	Characteristics	Risk of Injury	Prevention Tips
<b>Birth to 3 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eats, sleeps, cries</li> <li>Has strong sucking reflex</li> <li>Begins grasping and rolling over unexpectedly</li> <li>Needs support of head and neck</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falls from couches, tables, changing tables and bed</li> <li>Burns from hot liquids</li> <li>Choking and suffocation</li> <li>SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)</li> <li>Smothering due to co-sleeping with adults or other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Never leave infants alone on beds, changing tables, sofas, chairs or any other high surface.</li> <li>Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F.</li> <li>Install smoke alarms and check the batteries twice a year.</li> <li>Keep small objects and toys away from the baby.</li> <li>Infants should be placed on their back for sleeping.</li> <li>Avoid soft bedding/pillows in a baby's sleeping area.</li> <li>Approved child safety seats must be properly installed in the back of the car, and used.</li> </ul>
<b>4 to 6 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sits with minimum support</li> <li>Plays with open hands</li> <li>Reaches for objects</li> <li>Begins to put things in mouth</li> <li>Is increasingly curious about surroundings</li> <li>Wants to test, touch</li> <li>Rolls over completely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicle occupant injury</li> <li>Falls</li> <li>Burns from hot liquids</li> <li>Choking and suffocation</li> <li>SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)</li> <li>Shaken Baby Syndrome</li> <li>Smothering due to co-sleeping with adults or other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved child safety seats must be properly installed in the back seat facing the back of the car, and used.</li> <li>Never leave infants alone on beds, changing tables, sofas, chairs or any other high surface.</li> <li>Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F.</li> <li>Keep small objects and toys away from the baby.</li> <li>Infants should be placed on their back for sleeping, until they can turn over on their own.</li> <li>Avoid soft bedding/pillows in a baby's sleeping area.</li> <li>Never shake a baby, even playfully.</li> </ul>

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<b>7 to 12 months</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sits alone</li> <li>Very curious about everything</li> <li>Crawls</li> <li>Starts to walk</li> <li>Explores surroundings</li> <li>Pulls things</li> <li>Likes to go outside</li> <li>Imitates movements of adults and others</li> <li>Begins eating solid food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vehicle occupant injury</li> <li>Falls</li> <li>Burns from hot liquids</li> <li>Choking and suffocation</li> <li>SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)</li> <li>Shaken Baby Syndrome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approved child safety seats must be properly installed in the back seat facing the back of the car, and used at all times.</li> <li>Do not use walkers and other walker-type equipment.</li> <li>Always check water temperature before bathing infant. Set hot tap water temperature below 120° F</li> <li>Keep hot foods and liquids out of reach of children.</li> <li>Put guards around radiators, hot pipes and other surfaces.</li> <li>Never leave a child alone in or near any water (including tubs, toilets, buckets, swimming pool or any other containers of water) even for a few seconds.</li> <li>Never shake a baby, even playfully.</li> </ul>
<b>1 and 2 years</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Likes to move fast</li> <li>Is unsteady</li> <li>Tries to reach objects</li> <li>Runs</li> <li>Walks up and down stairs</li> <li>Likes to climb</li> <li>Pushes and pulls objects</li> <li>Can open doors, drawers, gates and windows</li> <li>Throws balls and other objects</li> <li>Begins talking, but cannot express needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motor vehicle injuries</li> <li>Falls</li> <li>Burns</li> <li>Poisoning</li> <li>Choking</li> <li>Drowning</li> <li>Child abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use toddler gates on stairways and keep any doors to cellars and porches locked.</li> <li>Show child how to climb up and down stairs</li> <li>Remove sharp-edged furniture from frequently used areas.</li> <li>Turn handles to back of stove while cooking.</li> <li>Teach child the meaning of “hot.”</li> <li>Keep electric cords out of child’s reach.</li> <li>Use shock stops or furniture to cover used and unused outlets.</li> <li>Store household products such as cleaners, chemicals, medicines and cosmetics in high places and locked cabinets.</li> <li>Avoid giving child peanuts, popcorn, raw vegetables and any other food that could cause choking.</li> <li>Toys should not have small parts.</li> </ul>

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Age	Characteristics	Risk of Injury	Prevention Tips
1 and 2 years (cont.)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always carefully supervise; never leave a child alone in or near any body of water even for a few minutes.</li> <li>• Check floors and reachable areas carefully for small objects such as pins, buttons, coins, etc.</li> <li>• Child Safety Seats, approved for weight and age, must be installed and used at all times.</li> </ul>
3 and 4 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begins making choices</li> <li>• Has lots of energy</li> <li>• Seeks approval and attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic injuries</li> <li>• Burns</li> <li>• Play area</li> <li>• Poisons</li> <li>• Tools and equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check and maintain playground equipment and environment</li> <li>• Child should play on age and weight-appropriate equipment</li> <li>• The surface under and around play equipment should be soft and shock absorbent. Use specifically approved surface materials.</li> <li>• Check that the child is dressed appropriately to avoid strangulation (e.g., no drawstrings on shirt, jackets, etc.)</li> <li>• Store household products, medicines and cosmetics out of child's sight and reach.</li> <li>• Teach child about the difference between food and nonfood, and what is not good to eat.</li> <li>• Watch child carefully during arts and crafts projects for mouthing of paints, brushes, paste and other materials. Use nontoxic supplies.</li> <li>• Store garden equipment, scissors and sharp knives out of reach.</li> <li>• Teach child the safe use of tools and other equipment, and supervise carefully when using.</li> <li>• Child Booster Seats approved for weight and age, must be installed and used at all times.</li> </ul>

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<b>5 years and Up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is stronger</li> <li>• Likes to explore the neighborhood</li> <li>• Will ask for information</li> <li>• Will seek out playmates</li> <li>• Becomes involved in sports / group activities</li> <li>• Plans and carries out ideas</li> <li>• Lacks judgement regarding dangers in the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic injuries</li> <li>• Burns</li> <li>• Play area</li> <li>• Guns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach pedestrian and traffic safety rules.</li> <li>• Older children must wear safety belts. Be a positive role model: cross streets correctly and wear a safety belt at all times when traveling in a car.</li> <li>• Always use helmets even on bicycles with training wheels and tricycles.</li> <li>• Teach children how to drop and roll if clothing catches fire.</li> <li>• Practice fire drills so child becomes familiar with the escape route and the sound of the smoke alarm.</li> <li>• Keep matches and lighters away from children. Stress bringing found matches to adults.</li> <li>• Check and maintain playground equipment and environment.</li> <li>• Child should use developmentally appropriate playground equipment</li> <li>• The surface under and around play equipment should be soft and shock absorbent. Use specifically approved surface materials.</li> <li>• Teach safe play rules and encourage child to put toys away after playing.</li> </ul>

**Adapted:**

University of California, San Francisco, School of Nursing, Department of Family Health Care Nursing, California Childcare Health Program (2006). Adapted from the Curriculum for Child Care Health Consultants. Retrieved March 23, 2006 from [http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/pdfs/Curricula/CCHC/10\\_CCHC\\_Inj\\_Prev\\_0506.pdf](http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/pdfs/Curricula/CCHC/10_CCHC_Inj_Prev_0506.pdf)

For more information, please contact the **Child Care Health Promotion Program** at **408.494.7414** or visit [www.sccphd.org/childcare](http://www.sccphd.org/childcare).

**Informative Web site includes:**

California Childcare Health Program: [www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org](http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org)

