

## Skills your child is learning

Your child's capacity to learn is at its greatest in the first five years. An insatiable curiosity to explore an adventurous play ground by touching and putting everything in the mouth can expose your child to a range of hazards. At this stage your child will have little, if any, sense of fear or danger. As your child learns to crawl, and then walk, access to these hazards and the risk of preventable injuries increases. Your child will copy your behaviour.

## Common safety concerns

Half of all child deaths and three out of four child injuries in this age group occur at home. This is because children spend most of the day at home. Some of the major concerns are:

- Potential drowning in the backyard swimming pool, garden water features, bath and nappy bucket.
- Access to medicines, chemicals and plants in the home that can cause poisoning
- Almost half of all preventable injuries are caused by falls from play ground equipment like slides, monkey bars and cubby houses. Tripping over toys and tools left lying around, falling off verandas and stairs is also common.
- Other preventable injuries include burns and scalds, choking and dog bites.

## In the backyard

Constant adult supervision is the most effective way to reduce the risk of injury. Most injuries are preventable by isolating the child from any hazards. For example build a play area in the backyard for your child that is fenced and has a self closing gate. The play area should be visible to an adult. Put your child's favourite toys in the play area to entertain your child. If a sand pit is included check it regularly for any



sticks, stones or sharp objects and cover it when not in use. Empty any containers that may retain water after it has rained.

## Drowning in the backyard

The risk of a toddler drowning in a backyard swimming pool is reduced by 74% when an Australian Standards isolation pool fence and self closing gate are erected and maintained. You are required by law to have a pool fence and self closing gate around your pool. However this does not make your pool drown proof.

- Always ensure there is adult supervision when your child is playing near water.
- Do not expect older children to look after younger siblings. Children have a short attention span and are easily distracted.
- Teach your child basic water familiarisation skills and how to swim when older.
- Learn CPR yourself and have a card fixed to your pool fence. Have a list of emergency numbers close to your telephone.
- Keep the pool fence clear of items propped against them



such as bicycles and pot plants that may give your child a way to climb over the pool fence.

- Always empty wading pools and other objects that collect water and store them upright or deflate them after each use.

## Playing in the backyard

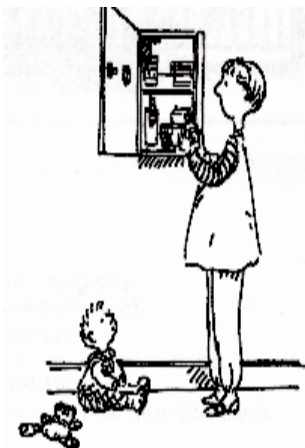
All play equipment needs to be strong, sturdy and well made with bolts and ends protected. As well:

- The under surface should be at least 200 mm deep and cover a two metre radius around the equipment. It should be of a soft and absorbing material like tanbark. Check the surface frequently to ensure it does not compact.
- Make sure that the height of the equipment is suitable to the age and size of your child.
- Remove slides and ladders to cubby houses that are designed for older children. A toddler might try to climb them.

## Poisons

There are many chemicals in homes that are harmful to your child. A child less than three years of age is particularly vulnerable. The most common cause of poisoning is paracetamol but other medicines, cleaning products, pesticides, cosmetics and fertilisers all present a risk to your child. Take these simple steps to minimise the risk:

- Install a child resistant medicine cupboard that is at least 1.5 metres high and well out of reach of young children.



- Install child resistant latches on kitchen and laundry cupboards where cleaning agents and chemicals are kept.
- Do not leave any medicines on the kitchen, bedside table or in the refrigerator within a child's reach.
- Have a lockable cupboard in the shed or garage to store chemicals.
- Check your garden for poisonous plants. You can find a list of poisonous plants on [www.rch.org.au](http://www.rch.org.au)

## Bathing

- Fill the bath with cold water first, add hot water and then a little more cold water to cool the tap.
- Always watch your child when in the bath. Take your child with you if you need to leave to answer the phone or door bell.
- Fit child resistant taps and mixing valves to avoid accidental scalds when the bath is not in use.



## Burns and scalds

Most burns and scalds are caused by spilling hot liquid over a toddler.

- Just boil enough hot water for your tea or coffee. Hot water continues to scald for up to thirty minutes after it has boiled.
- Never hold your child while carrying hot liquids. Place hot liquids well inside the edge of a table or bench.
- Use stove guards, curly cords and cordless electric appliances to avoid your child pulling them down. Keep irons away from your child's reach.

If your home was built before 1998 it will probably have an old hot water system. Old hot water systems can deliver hot water up to 70 degrees. **A child exposed to this temperature will receive third degree burns within one second.** Ask your plumber for a valve priced within your budget that can be installed to reduce the water temperature to a safe 50 degrees.

## Finger jams

**A child less than three years of age is particularly vulnerable to jamming fingers in doors. This can result in amputations.**

- Fix protective guards to doors. A variety of products is available for purchase from major retail outlets.
- Use slow, self closing springs on the front and back door to prevent them from slamming shut.
- Look for this label when purchasing nursery furniture and strollers that otherwise might trap little fingers.



## Choking

**Hard foods like peanuts, raw carrot and apple are the main cause of child choking. To prevent this happening:**

- Insist that your child sits down quietly when eating food or drinking.
- Grate hard foods for your child to eat.
- Choking can also occur when small pieces, such as beads, buttons, cords and stuffing become loosened from toys. Check toys regularly.

