



Health  
Canada

Santé  
Canada

# Is Your Child Safe?



Canada

# Is Your Child Safe?

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## Introduction

Children are naturally curious and do not easily recognize and avoid hazards; therefore, they need extra protection and care. Many injuries can be avoided by supervising children carefully and by making their surroundings safer.



## Baby Slings & Baby Carriers

The use of baby slings and baby carriers (worn by the caregiver) has led to serious injuries, and in some cases, the death of babies in Canada. Slings that use knots or rings to hold the two ends of fabric together pose a potential safety risk because knots can come loose and fabric can slip through the ring, causing the baby to fall. It is important to choose the right sling or carrier for you and the baby.

- When choosing a baby sling or baby carrier, look for a model that:
  - is appropriate for the age and size of the baby and that it can accommodate the growth of the baby.
  - is the appropriate size for the adult carrying the baby.
  - comes with detailed and easy to understand instructions. Follow them carefully and keep for future use.
  - will not allow the baby to slip through the leg openings or fall over the side of the product.



- comes with safety straps. Make sure that they are always securely fastened.
- Before each use, check for ripped seams and other signs of wear that may make the product unsafe.
- Take caution when bending over, hold onto the baby with one hand and bend at the knees, to prevent the baby from slipping out of the sling or carrier.

## Baby Walkers

**Baby walkers are banned in Canada. It is a criminal offence to sell, advertise, or import new or used baby walkers, even for your own use. It is also a criminal offence to give them away.**

## Bath Seats

The use of infant bath seats and bath rings has been linked to the drowning death of several infants in Canada. Babies have drowned when the suction cups on the bath seat came loose, and the bath seat tipped over, when the baby slipped through the leg openings, or when the babies were able to climb out of the bath seat. These deaths occurred when the babies were out of their caregiver's sight and reach for only seconds.

- Supervise children in the bath tub at all times. Keep them in sight and within reach.
- Do not rely on a bath seat to ensure the safety of a baby in a bath tub.
- If you have to leave the room for any reason, take the baby with you.

## General Bath Safety:

- When filling the tub, turn on the cold water first and then the hot water. When finished filling the tub, turn off the hot water first and then the cold water.
- Test the water before placing your child in the tub. To avoid scalds, the temperature of the hot water from the tap should be a maximum of 49°C (120°F). If possible, set your hot water heater thermostat at 49°C (120°F).

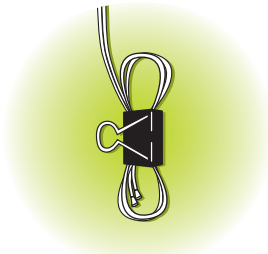
## Blind and Curtain Cords

There is a possible strangulation or entanglement hazard for babies and young children who have access to looped or long blind and curtain cords. There are steps you can take to reduce the risk of this type of tragedy from happening in your home.

**Whether your blinds or curtains are new or old, do not leave cords hanging. Keep the cords high and out of the reach of children.**

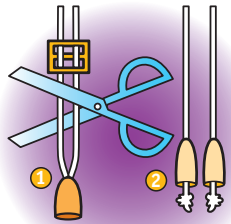
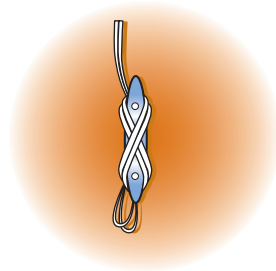
- Cut the cords short when blinds are fully down or when curtains are fully closed.

- **Tie the cords out of the reach of children**, whether the blind is up or down, make sure children cannot reach the cords.
- Never put a crib, bed, high chair or playpen near a window or a patio door where a child can reach a blind or curtain cord.



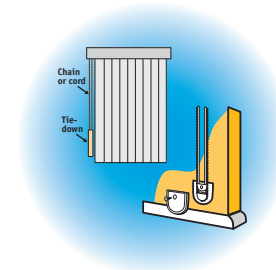
◀ Use a clip, clothes pin, or a big twist tie to keep the cord high and out of the reach of children.

▶ Wrap the cord around a cleat or two nails or screws that you have attached to the wall near the top of the blinds or curtains, high and out of the reach of children.



◀ Remove the loop in the cord by cutting the cord in half. Then, put plastic tassels or a break-away device at the end of the cords.

▶ Install tie-downs for vertical blinds. You can buy these devices at hardware or department stores. When installing tie-downs, follow the manufacturer's instructions that come with the product. Make sure that the tie-down device is securely attached to the wall beside the window.



- Do not put sofas, chairs, tables, shelves or bookcases near windows. This will prevent children from climbing up to reach the blind or curtain cord.

## Bunk Beds

**Children under 6 years of age should never use the upper bunk of bunk beds.**

Since 1985, a number of deaths were reported in Canada when children under 6 years of age were placed in the upper bunk. Typically, the children suffocated when their bodies slipped between the guard rail and the mattress.

- Check regularly to make sure the frame of the bed is sturdy and in good condition.
- Make sure the upper bunk has guard rails on all sides even if the bed is placed against a wall.

- Make sure the spaces in the guard rail are small enough so that a child cannot slip through.
- Mattresses should fit snugly on all sides leaving no gaps between the mattress and the sides of the bed.
- See also **Safe Sleep**.

Health Canada recommends the use of bunk beds that meet the requirements of the current ASTM International bunk bed standards. Know before you buy; check the label, visit the manufacturer's Web site, or ask your retailer, to find out if the bunk bed you have selected meets these standards.



## Car Seats

For information about car seats, contact Transport Canada:  
Telephone: 1-800-333-0371  
Web Address: [www.tc.gc.ca](http://www.tc.gc.ca)

## Change Tables

When using a change table, remember that in the moment it takes you to reach for something, the baby can roll over and fall.

- If you have to leave the room for any reason, always take the baby with you.
- If the change table has safety straps, use them to keep the baby in place while being changed.
- If the change table is designed as an insert for a playpen or a crib, **never** place the baby in the playpen or crib while the change table insert is still in place.

## Children's Clothing

Cotton and cotton-blend fabrics catch fire and burn more quickly than most synthetic materials. Nylon and polyester are more difficult to catch fire and burn more slowly.

**Loose-fitting** cotton and cotton-blend sleepwear for children do not meet flammability requirements. If you prefer cotton and cotton-blends make sure the sleepwear is a snug-fitting style, such as polo pyjamas or sleepers.

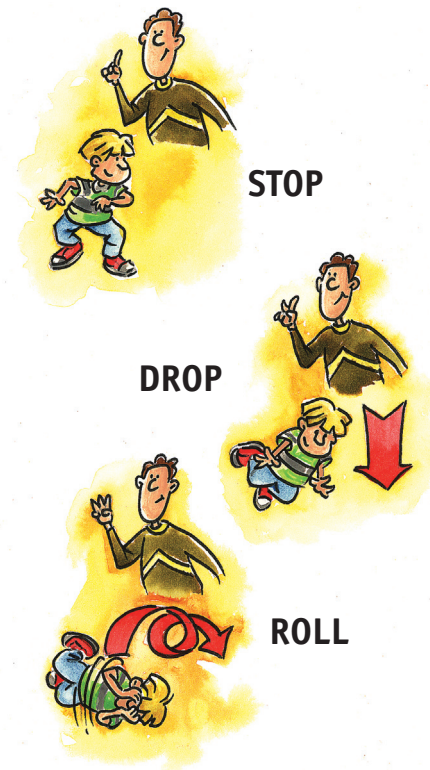
**Snug-fitting** clothing is less likely to catch fire than clothing with flowing skirts, wide sleeves, or large ruffles.

Other safety considerations for children's clothing:

- Dress children in actual sleepwear when putting them to bed rather than T-shirts or other day clothes. Most day clothes do not meet the flammability requirements for sleepwear.
- Drawstrings or cords on children's clothing should be removed. Children can strangle on drawstrings and cords that get caught around their neck or on other objects.
- Belts, ties, or sashes on children's robes should be stitched firmly to the centre back of these products. Young children are at risk of strangulation from any type of cord that can be detached from the clothing.

- Check for loose buttons or other small parts as they could become a choking hazard.
- Check blankets and sleepers regularly for loose threads and fix them immediately, as threads can wrap around a baby's finger or neck and cause injury.
- See also **Safe Sleep**.

**Teach your children about the dangers of fire. If their clothes catch fire, teach them to "STOP, DROP, and ROLL".**



For more information on fire prevention, contact your local fire department.

## Cosmetics

- Keep cosmetic products, such as nail polish removers, diaper creams, mouthwash, and perfumes, out of the reach of children. Some cosmetics can be harmful to young children if swallowed.
- Keep powders, talc and cornstarch away from the baby's face and out of reach to avoid inhalation, which can cause breathing problems.
- Avoid excessive or prolonged use of bubble bath or bath oil preparations. If a rash, redness, or itching occurs, stop using the product and see a doctor. The use of bath products can result in skin irritation and urinary tract infections.
- Use only cosmetic and other personal products suitable for the age of your child. Some products should only be used by adults, such as those containing alpha-hydroxy acids (AHAs), hair removal products (depilatories, waxes, etc.), hair dye, and tooth whiteners.

## Cribs

Cribs made before September 1986 do not meet current safety regulations and should not be used. It is a criminal offence to advertise, sell, or give away these cribs.

- Only use a crib that displays a label with a date of manufacture after September 1986. There should be a label on the crib that shows the date it was made and the name of the manufacturer.

- Do not modify a crib in any way. Always follow manufacturer's instructions for using the crib.
- To check that the mattress support system is secure, shake the crib from side to side, thump the mattress from the top, and push up hard on the mattress support from underneath the crib. The mattress support system is designed to hold the mattress firmly in place.



- Push the mattress into one corner and measure the opposite sides. The space between the mattress and the sides of the crib should not be more than 3 cm ( $1\frac{3}{16}$  in). The mattress should not be more than 15 cm (6 in) thick.
- Check that the mattress is firm. Mattresses that are too soft or worn down in any area could cause a gap where a baby's head could become trapped and the baby could suffocate.
- Ensure the mattress is at its lowest position when the baby is able to push up on their hands and knees.
- Remove mobiles and toy bars when the baby begins to push up on their hands and knees.
- Avoid the use of soft pillows, comforters, stuffed toys, and bumper pads in the baby's crib as they can pose a suffocation hazard.
- After placing the baby in the crib, ensure the sides are up and locked securely in position.
- Do not harness or tie a baby in a crib and do not leave a baby in a crib with a necklace, elastic

band, scarf, or a pacifier on a long cord. These items could cause strangulation.

- Keep the crib away from window covering cords, lamps, appliances, or anything else that can hurt a baby.
- A **cradle** is also a safe place for an infant to sleep until they are 6 months of age or can sit-up on their own.
- See also **Safe Sleep**.

## General Household Products

- Install and maintain **smoke detectors**. Check that they work, as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Keep cords for **electrical appliances**, such as deep fryers, kettles, steam irons, and toasters, out of the reach of children. Children can be hurt or burned if they pull an appliance off a counter.
- Turn pot handles toward the centre of the **stove**.
- Put up a barrier around a gas or wood burning **fireplace** or **wood burning stove** to prevent children from touching hot

surfaces and being burned. Fireplace doors and wood burning stoves can become very hot during and after use.

- Keep children away from the **barbecue** when in use.

## Household Chemicals

Household chemical products, such as bleaches, paint thinners, ammonia, and abrasive cleaners are among the top causes of injuries and deaths in children under the age of 5. Even a small amount of a chemical product can be harmful to a child. Bad taste and odours do not keep children away from chemical products. Chemical products can be poisonous, flammable, corrosive, or the containers can be explosive.

- Teach children that the hazard symbols on the containers mean **DANGER! DO NOT TOUCH!**
- Keep all chemical products in a locked cupboard that is out of the reach of children. Never let children play with the containers.



- Keep household chemical products in original containers. Do not transfer or store chemical products in beverage containers. Never cover up or remove labels. Keep all safety information.
- Make sure that child-resistant closures are working properly. **Child-resistant closures are not child-proof.**
- Close the cap on the container tightly even if you set it down for a moment.
- Read the label and follow the instructions before each use of a chemical product.
- Never mix chemicals together as some mixtures can produce dangerous fumes.
- Keep the phone number for the poison control centre by your telephone.
- Keep other harmful products, such as cosmetics, drugs, vitamins, and first-aid treatment products, out of the sight and reach of children.

For more information, see **Stay Safe - An Education Program About Hazard Symbols!** on the Health Canada Web site: [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/staysafe](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/staysafe).

## Lighters, Matches and Candles

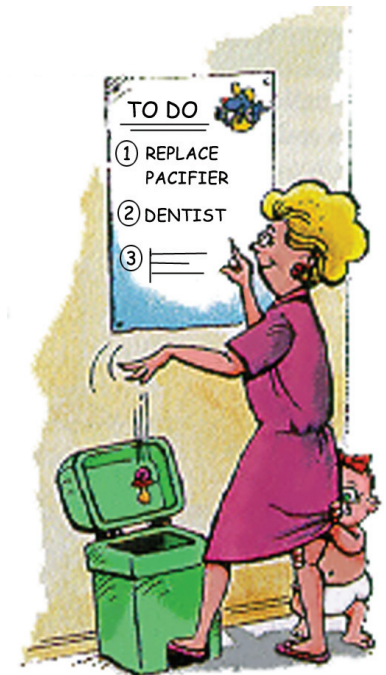
- Keep lighters and matches out of the sight and reach of children.
- Lighters may be child-resistant but **they are not child-proof.**
- Keep candles out of the reach of children. Burning candles should always be attended to by an adult.
- Do not place burning candles on or near anything that can catch fire.

## Pacifiers

- Never tie or hang a pacifier or any other object around the neck of a baby or a young child. This can result in strangulation.
- Pacifiers should be replaced at least every two months rather than waiting for signs of breakdown.
- Inspect pacifiers daily. Check the nipple for changes in

texture, tears, or holes. These can appear with age or exposure to heat, certain foods, or sunlight.

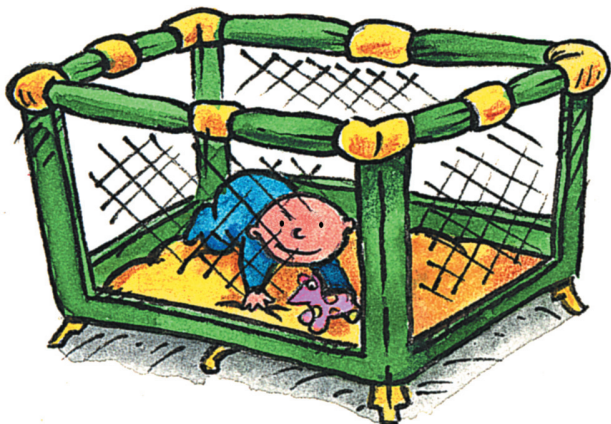
- Check that the nipple and any ring or handle remains firmly attached when it is pulled upon forcefully.
- Any pacifier displaying signs of breakdown should be thrown out right away because the broken or loose pieces are choking hazards.
- A teething ring is a safer alternative for a baby who is chewing on a pacifier.



## Playgrounds

Children have died when their clothing or drawstrings got caught on playground equipment or on fences. Other children have died when they became entangled on ropes or skipping ropes attached to playground equipment.

- Always supervise children and teach them to use the equipment safely.
- Remove cords and drawstrings from children's hoods, hats, and jackets.
- Tuck in all clothing, such as a scarf, that can get caught on playground equipment.
- Take off bicycle helmets before using playground equipment. Bicycle helmets can get caught on equipment and strangle a child.



- Check playground equipment for ropes. Do not let children tie ropes or skipping ropes to playground equipment.

## Playpens

A playpen should be a place where a baby is safe. Make sure the playpen is a newer model with small holes in the mesh.

- Never leave a baby in a playpen with the side down; the baby can roll into the space between the mattress and the mesh side and suffocate.
- Avoid playpens that have sharp edges or hinges that can pinch, scrape, or cut fingers.
- Make sure side latches are in their fully closed position when setting up a playpen.

- Never put scarves, necklaces, or cords in the playpen or around a baby's neck. These items can catch on the playpen and strangle a baby.
- Remove mobiles and toy bars when the baby begins to push up on their hands and knees.
- Check for tears in vinyl rails or in the mattress pad of the playpen. A baby can bite off small pieces and choke.
- If a change table or bassinet is provided as an insert for the playpen, **never** place a baby in the playpen while the change table or bassinet insert is still in place.

## Portable Bed Rails

Portable bed rails are installed on adult beds to prevent children from falling out, but they may pose an entrapment hazard.

- Never place a child younger than 2 years of age on a bed fitted with a portable bed rail.
- Make sure portable bed rails are securely anchored and that there are no gaps between the mattress and the bed rail.

- Only use portable bed rails that meet the requirements of the current ASTM International standard for portable bed rails.

## Safe Sleep

- The safest place for a baby to sleep is alone in a crib. A cradle is also a safe place for an infant to sleep until they are 6 months of age or can sit-up on their own. There is an increased risk of suffocation or entrapment when placing a baby to sleep in a place other than a crib or a cradle.
- Never place a baby to sleep on the same sleep surface as an adult or another child.
- Children under 6 years of age should not sleep on the top bunk of bunk beds. (See **Bunk Beds**)
- Children should be dressed in sleepwear that meet flammability requirements. Avoid putting children to bed in day wear or in clothing that have strings or loose belts. (See **Children's Sleepwear**)
- Toys with batteries should not be taken to bed with a child. (See **Toys With Batteries**)



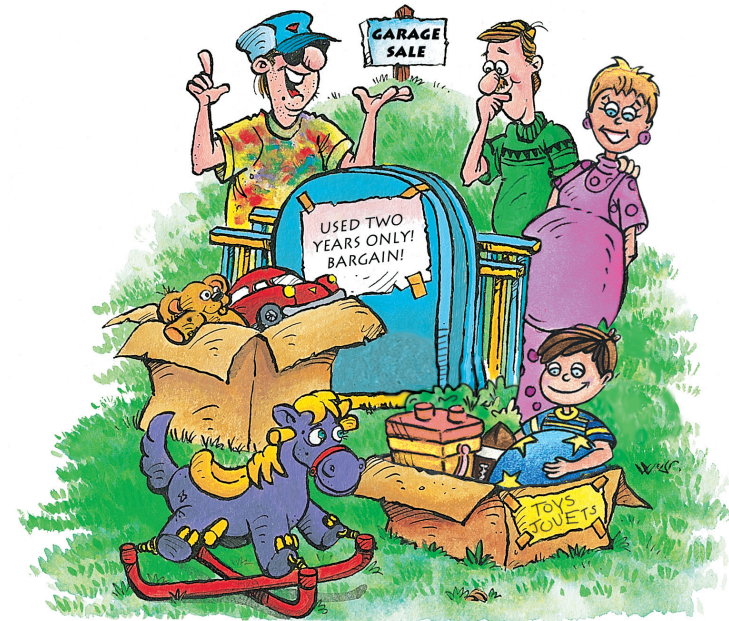
## Safety Gates

Some gates manufactured before 1990 have wide V-shaped openings along the top, or large diamond-shaped openings along the sides, and do not meet current safety regulations. These gates pose safety risks and should not be used.

- Select a gate that is recommended for the child's age and is appropriate for the area in which it will be used.
- Install safety gates according to the manufacturer's instructions.



- Do not use pressure gates at the top of a stairway. Use hardware-mounted gates that do not use pressure, they are more secure.
- Make sure the gate is secure each time it is closed.
- Avoid using gates with holes that can be used by children to climb over the gate.
- Openings in the gate should be small enough that a child's head cannot fit through.



## Second-Hand Products

If you are buying or inheriting a used crib, playpen, stroller, or other children's products, make sure that:

- the product is in good condition and meets the current safety regulations.
- the manufacturer's instructions for safe use are included.
- the labels are attached.
- all of the safety features of the product are present and working.

For more details on safety, refer to the specific products listed in this booklet.

## Strollers

When choosing or using a stroller keep these points in mind:

- Always supervise children when they are in the stroller.
- Choose a sturdy stroller and follow the manufacturer's instructions for the child's weight and height.
- Always use the safety harness and lap belts, and make sure that the child is seated properly in the stroller.



- Use the brakes when stopped, and when placing the child in or removing the child from the stroller.
- Make sure that the child's hands and feet are not in the way before making adjustments to the stroller.
- Check the stroller regularly for signs of damage and to make sure the wheels are securely attached.

- Do not use pillows or blankets as padding, as they pose a suffocation risk.
- Do not carry additional children, items, or accessories in or on the stroller except as recommended in the manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not use a stroller on an escalator.

## Suspended Baby Jumpers

Babies have been injured by falling when the jumper was not secured properly to the door frame or when parts of the jumper broke.

- Always supervise a baby while they are in a baby jumper. If you have to leave the room for any reason, take the baby with you.
- Look for a model that comes with well written and detailed instructions. Keep these for future use.

- Follow all of the manufacturer's instructions when installing the jumper, including the guidelines for:
  - age, weight and physical abilities of the baby.
  - dimensions and strength of the door frame.
- Check all parts of the jumper regularly to be sure that it is secure.



## Toys

Select only toys suitable for the child's age group, and make sure to read and follow all warnings, safety messages, and instructions that come with the toy.

- **Always supervise children at play and teach them how to use toys safely.**
- Keep small toys, small balls, or small loose toy parts out of the sight and reach of children under 3 years of age or older children who still put toys in their mouth. The small items are choking hazards.
- Repair or throw away weak or broken toys - check often for hazards like loose parts, broken pieces, or sharp edges.



- Check that toys like rattles and teething toys have handles or parts that are large enough so they will not get stuck in an infant's throat and block their airway.
- Keep all toys, especially plush and soft toys, away from heat sources like stoves, fireplaces, and heaters.
- Avoid toys with cords, especially stretchy cords that are long enough to wrap around a child's neck.
- Avoid loud toys as loud noise can damage a child's hearing. A toy that is loud for an adult is likely too loud for a child.



## Toy Boxes

- Use a toy box without a lid, or use a toy box with a lightweight lid, sturdy supportive hinges, and air holes. Heavy lids can fall on children's heads and necks causing death.
- Children should not have access to airtight storage bins, trunks, or boxes. Access to these types of storage products could lead to suffocation if a child climbs inside.

## Ride-On Toys

- Choose a ride-on toy that suits the child's age, size, and abilities.
- Check that the ride-on toy will not tip when the child is using it.
- Be aware that a child on a wheeled ride-on toy can move very quickly:
  - Use a ride-on toy far away from stairs, traffic, swimming pools, and other dangerous areas.
  - Use a ride-on toy away from hazards such as lamps, cords, decorations, or appliances that could be knocked or pulled down onto a child

### Latex Balloons

Latex balloons have caused a number of deaths. Deaths have occurred in children as old as 9 years. Balloons or broken balloon pieces can be inhaled and as a result, block a child's airway.

- Latex balloons are best used for decoration, not for play.
- Always keep inflated and uninflated latex balloons, and pieces of broken balloons, out of the reach of children.
- Adults should always inflate balloons.
- Supervise children when balloons are around.

### Toys With Batteries

- Only adults should install batteries. Improper installation, or mixing different battery types, can cause batteries to leak or overheat, which could injure a child.
- Make sure batteries in toys are not accessible to the child.
- A child should not take battery-operated toys to bed. Burns or other injuries could result from batteries leaking or overheating.

- Call your doctor or poison control centre right away if a child swallows a battery. Batteries can be poisonous.

### Trampolines

Trampolines should not be considered as toys; there is a serious risk of injury to children using them. Most trampoline-related injuries happen at private homes, usually in backyards on full-size trampolines.

The hazards that result in injuries and deaths include: colliding with another person on the trampoline, landing improperly while jumping or doing stunts on the trampoline, falling or jumping off the trampoline, and falling onto the trampoline's springs or frame.



### Always supervise children when they are using a trampoline.

- Do not allow children under 6 years of age to use a trampoline, even when supervised.
- Allow only one person on the trampoline at a time.
- Do not allow children to perform somersaults and other stunts.

### General Safety Tips

- To prevent falls, cuts, and other injuries, be attentive to a child placed in a grocery shopping cart. Children should stay seated and belted at all times when in a grocery shopping cart.
- Check for recalls on children's equipment by contacting the manufacturer or Health Canada.



- Use plastic safety covers over electrical outlets so that children cannot poke their fingers or metal objects into them. Ensure that these covers are secure to prevent choking.
- Make sure plastic bags are kept out of the reach of children to prevent suffocation.
- When visiting family and friends, be aware that not everyone will take the same precautions you do for ensuring an area is free of hazards and safe for children. Supervise children closely.

- Keep small children away from buckets, diaper pails, toilets, and other large household containers that are filled with liquid. Toddlers have been known to fall into such products and drown.
- Make sure water sources, such as hot tubs, pools, ponds, and spas are not accessible to children.

- Scan your home from a child's point of view; crawl on your hands and knees to look for possible hazards and then remove the hazard.
- When placing furniture, such as a wall unit, bookcase, or china cabinet in your home, make sure the item is securely fastened to the wall. Televisions should be placed on lower furniture as far back as possible. Use angle braces or anchors to secure furniture to the wall. Children may climb these items, causing the item to fall on them, which can result in death.

## Other Resources

Transport Canada  
www.tc.gc.ca  
1-800-333-0371

Pest Management Regulatory Agency  
www.pmara-arla.gc.ca  
1-800-267-6315

Canadian Paediatric Society  
www.cps.ca  
613-526-9397

Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (SIDS)  
www.sidscanada.org  
1-800-END-SIDS  
1-800-363-7437

*Hazardous Products Act*  
<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/H-3>

Poison Control  
*Generally on the first page of your telephone book under Emergency Numbers*



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**T**he Consumer Product Safety Bureau of Health Canada, in consultation with industry, consumers, and the medical community, has developed safety regulations and standards for a number of children's products, among them, toys, strollers, cribs, playpens, and safety gates.

The Information and Education Unit provides information to families, caregivers, daycare centres, and health professionals through initiatives such as safety awareness campaigns, pamphlets, and education bulletins.

For more information on injury prevention, please contact:

**Information and Education Unit  
Health Canada**

**Address Locator: 3504D**

**Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9**

**Telephone: (613) 952-1014**

**Fax: (613) 941-4376**

**E-mail: CPS-SPC@hc-sc.gc.ca**

**Toll-free: 1-866-662-0666**

(calls will be routed to the nearest  
Product Safety Office)

For inquiries and complaints about consumer products, please contact your nearest Product Safety office listed below, or use the toll-free number above.

**British Columbia & Yukon**  
Burnaby, BC (604) 666-5003  
Bby\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca

**Alberta & Northwest Territories**  
Edmonton, AB (780) 495-2626  
Edm\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca  
Calgary, AB (403) 292-4677  
Cal\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca

**Manitoba & Saskatchewan**  
Saskatoon, SK (306) 975-4502  
Sk\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca  
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Mb\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca

**Ontario & Nunavut**  
Toronto, ON (416) 973-4705  
Hamilton, ON (905) 572-2845  
Tor\_Prodsafe@hc-sc.gc.ca

**Quebec**  
Montreal, QC (514) 283-5488  
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Quebec City, QC (418) 648-4327  
Quebec\_Prod@hc-sc.gc.ca

**Atlantic**  
Moncton, New Brunswick (506) 851-6638  
Halifax, Nova Scotia (902) 426-8300  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
(709) 772-4050  
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