

Baby



Walkers

There is a growing concern about the dangers associated with the use of baby walkers. Serious injuries can result, including head injuries to children aged 0-1 years. Two thirds of injuries are associated with the walker falling down stairs or tipping over (due to small changes in the surface level). A further 20% involve children gaining access to hazards they would otherwise not be able to reach.

Baby walkers make children taller and mobile much earlier than normal. This enables them to cross a room in seconds and reach things that would normally be out of reach.

Because of the height and mobility these walkers give them they can be scalded by pulling a boiling kettle or hot drink down onto themselves, gain access to open fires, heaters, irons and cleaners. There is a heightened risk of burn injuries with over half requiring serious treatment. .

Research obtained worldwide shows that most injuries from baby walkers occur when the carer was within inches of the child

'Real life' case

A ten month old child in a baby walker – The child changed direction and tipped over the change in floor level before his mum could reach him. This fall resulted in a skull fracture.

Child Development

Use of a baby walker has been known to delay the development of a child's gross motor skills

Children learn by interacting with their environment. This can be through tasting, feeling, watching, listening to or copying those around them.

Baby walkers are designed to encourage infants to discover their environment at a different height, often before they can identify the hidden dangers that can cause them serious injuries. A child in a baby walker cannot see the lower half of its body. This can prevent the child from learning how to use its body when out of the baby walker.

child safety is no accident

Precautions



WARNING Avoid injuries.
Baby can move fast in this walker. Never leave baby unattended. Do not allow near steps, stairs, heaters, electrical cords or hot objects.

All children need a safe environment that can stimulate their interests and skills. Kidsafe seeks a ban on baby walkers and recommends other options to keep babies safe and amused. If you decide to use a walker:

- Choose only a newer style built to American ASTM standard F977-00. Only products passing this test may be retailed under NSW law. They must be conspicuously labeled with the WARNING above
- Check that any locking mechanisms work and are out of your baby's reach
- Make sure metal parts are smooth and are free from sharp edges
- Do not buy a baby walker if it has gaps that could trap a baby's fingers or toes

- Block access to dangers like steps and heaters. Check for hazards like dangling kettle cords
- Always provide close supervision – within an arm's reach and in sight of baby
- If you buy a second-hand baby walker look for signs of wear and tear, especially in the seat and make sure the breaking mechanism works

Better Alternatives

- Placing a child in a non-movable activity centre or playpen is a safer recommendation and will still provide stimulation to promote a child's development than the use of a baby walker
- Placing a baby onto a rug promotes large muscles skills like rolling, sitting, pulling, co-ordination, balance, crawling and walking. These skills all promote self-confidence, self help skills and independence

All children develop at their own unique rate and will encounter bruises and scrapes along the way. The dangers associated with unsafe product designs is one area that parents and carers as well as the community can make an informed choice about how we keep our children safe.

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