



SAFETY

Children love to explore their surroundings. Doing so is a normal part of their development. Your job is to make their environment, indoors and out, as safe as possible so that exploring is adventurous without being dangerous.

By regularly checking your daycare for unsafe equipment and other potential hazards you can create an environment in which children can live and play safely. **Remember that good supervision is the single most important feature of any safety program.**

In the pages that follow, you will find information on these safety topics:

1. Playground Safety
2. Car Seat Safety
3. Indoor Safety
4. Cribs and Playpens
5. Safety Gates
6. Baby Walkers
7. Bath Seats
8. Suffocation or Choking
9. Poisons
10. Plants
11. Sun Safety

The brochures provided at the end of this section will offer more detailed information on children's safety. As well, links to credible web pages with additional information on children's safety have been included.



PLAYGROUND SAFETY

Safety requirements and recommendations for playgrounds can be found in the Canadian Standards Association's (CSA) Standard Z614-07, titled "Children's Playspaces and Equipment" and in "Facilities and Equipment for Day Care Centres" from Health Canada. Below is the website where the Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard can be purchased.

www.csa.ca/news/releases/Default.asp?articleID=9062&language=english

Playgrounds must meet the safety requirements in the standard for play equipment, clearance distances and protective surfacing.

Daily inspections of the playground area should be done to look for obvious hazards, such as broken or missing pieces on equipment and to assess the condition of the protective surfacing. Make sure all play areas are free of hazards such as deep holes, glass, and rusty and/or sharp objects. If the protective surfacing is sand or pea gravel, rake or even roto-till it as often as needed to keep it from becoming hard-packed or displaced. Use the "Playground Safety Checklist" included in the resource section to guide you.

In addition, an annual playground inspection, conducted by a Canadian Certified Playground Inspector, is recommended. Two of the Health Unit's public health inspectors are certified to conduct these inspections. For more information about playground inspections, call the Health Unit at 625-5926 or 1-888-294-6630, ext. 5926.

CAR SEATS

According to Canadian statistics, at least **80%** of car seats are installed improperly. Common errors include not tightening the seat belt and harness enough and not using the tether strap properly when required. Here are some general tips to follow to ensure a safe ride for everyone. For even greater assurance, attending a car seat inspection clinic is recommended. These are available by calling St. John Ambulance in Thunder Bay. Outside of Thunder Bay contact your local Health Unit office to find out who offers a car seat inspection clinic nearest you.

- **Always follow the car seat manufacturer's instruction booklet for proper installation and for the proper height and weight restrictions for the car seat.**
- All car seats used in Canada must have the National Safety Mark attached to the car seat.





- Car seats purchased in other countries do not meet Canada's safety standards, even if they look the same. It is illegal to use a car seat from another country outside of Canada.
- Every time the car seat is taken in and out of a vehicle it increases the chance of installation errors. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions each and every time.
- The safest place for all children under the age of 13 is in the back seat away from all active airbags.
- Always ensure that the car seat you are using is correct for each child's height and weight.
- **Rear-Facing Infant Seats** are used from birth until around one year of age or about 10 kg (22lbs). Check the weight limits with each seat as they vary.
- Rear-facing seats should face the back of the vehicle, rest on a 45 degree angle and, when tested, it should not move more than 2.5 cm (1 in) side to side.
- The harness strap should be slotted on the car seat at or below where the shoulders of the infant would rest. The harness clip should be at the level of the armpits of the infant. You should not be able to fit more than one finger underneath the harness strap and the baby's collarbone, or the car seat strap is too loose.
- The longer a child stays in a rear-facing seat, within the height and weight restrictions of the car seat, the safer the child will be.
- Use the rear-facing seat until:
 - the baby is at least 10kg (22lbs)
 - the baby can pull themselves to a standing position
 - the baby is 1 year old
- Bulky clothing can create hazards as it could make the harness too loose. According to Transport Canada, (Dec. 2007), a baby can be thrown from the seat in the event of an accident.
- It is better to remove any bulky clothing before getting the child into the seat or to dress the infant in fleece clothing with a blanket for warmth during the winter months.
- **Forward-Facing Child Seats** are used when the child is between one year of age to about 4.5 years of age and weighs between 10 kg (22 lbs) and at least 18 kg (40 lbs). Some seats accommodate higher weights so it is important to refer to the manufacturer's instructions.



- All forward-facing seats must be attached with a tether strap. If a bolt or hook to anchor the tether strap to the vehicle is not present, have your car dealer install one.
- When installing the car seat use your knee and your body weight to tighten and fasten the seat belt to the car seat. Follow the instruction booklet that comes with the car seat.
- **Booster Seats** are now required by law as of September 1, 2005 for children who have outgrown their car seat but are too small for a regular seat belt.
- Booster seats raise a child up so the adult seat belt works better.
- Special kits are available to have shoulder belts installed in older vehicles. Ask your car dealer about having one installed.
- **A Seat Belt** can be used by a child once any one of the following conditions has been met:
 - the child is 8 years old
 - the child weighs 80 lbs
 - the child is 145 cm (4'9") in height
- It is important to ensure that the seat belt crosses over the chest and not the face or neck and that the lap belt is over the hips and not over the stomach.
- It is important to only buckle in one person per seat belt. Never buckle two children together.
- Set a good example by using seat belts each and every time you are in the car no matter how short the trip.

INDOOR SAFETY

Take the following steps to create a safe indoor environment:

- Ensure the building is structurally sound and in good condition in accordance with the Ontario Building Code, Property Standards By-law of your community and Residential Standards Guidelines for Ontario. Ensure that it has the requisite number of washrooms in accordance with the Ontario Building Code.
- Provide handrails at a level easily reached by children for all flights of stairs. Closely supervise the children on the stairs.
- Place guards on windows that are 2 ½ feet above floor level or lower to prevent children from falling through window screens or window panes.



- Never leave an infant or toddler unattended on a raised surface such as a change table or counter.
- Ensure that all change tables have a protective safety ledge or strap.
- Make sure that sleeping rooms are well ventilated.
- Protect all heating elements, such as hot water pipes, to prevent accidental scalding.
- Ensure that hot water tank thermostats are set at a maximum of 49°C (120°F) to prevent accidental scalding. Staff should monitor children while in the washroom and supervise hand washing to ensure safety and proper technique.
- Cover all electrical outlets with safety caps. Keep extension cords out of reach.
- Check large play equipment regularly for structural safety and potential hazards such as sharp edges and protrusions. Place mats under climbing equipment to cushion a child's landing in the event of a fall.
- Children under 3 years of age are prone to choking because they often place things in their mouths. If an item fits through the hole of a toilet paper roll, it is too small for young children and should be removed.
- Always supervise children at play and teach them safety rules.
- Furniture and shelves should be free of sharp edges.
- Anchor dressers, cabinets and book cases to the wall to prevent tipping over should a child climb on them.
- The washroom must be closely supervised because sinks, toilets, pails, diaper pails and bathtubs are of great interest to children. Infants and toddlers have poor balance and have drowned in less than 4 cm (1 1/2 in.) of water in less than five minutes. Children should never be left alone near water. Adults must be able to easily open washroom doors that can be locked.
- Go through the "Home Safety Checklist" to childproof your daycare. It can be found in the Resource Section of this binder or on line at: www.tbdhu.com/Safety/SafeKids/



CRIBS AND PLAYPENS

- Infants should be placed on their backs to sleep.
- The safest place for an infant to sleep is in a crib alone. They should never be placed in a regular bed, waterbed, futon, air bed, sofa or arm chair.
- Other products such as carriages, strollers, car seats, infant swings, bouncers or playpens are not intended to be used as a crib.
- Cribs made before September 1986 do not meet current safety standards and are not safe to use. It is illegal to sell, advertise, or give away cribs made before September 1986.
- All cribs must be affixed with a label that states the date of manufacture and name of manufacturer.
- Do not alter cribs in any way. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for assembly and use.
- Ensure the crib frame is solid and check all screws regularly and tighten as needed. Check other parts for wear and repair or replace as needed.
- The mattress needs to be placed so it is tight against all four sides of the crib. The space between the crib and the mattress should not exceed 3 cm (1 3/16 in) and the mattress thickness should not exceed 15 cm (6in).
- Make sure the mattress is firm and not worn out. A soft mattress could cause a child to suffocate.
- The mattress needs to be moved to the lowest level once the infant is able to sit up.
- Avoid pillows, blankets, rolled towels, toys, comforters and bumper pads in cribs as they can pose a suffocation hazard.
- **Playpen** safety standards have improved over the years. Ensure all playpens have the following information attached:
 1. Name and address of the manufacturer
 2. Model number of playpen
 3. The month and year of manufacture of the product.
 4. A statement that "This product complies with requirements of The Playpen Regulations (Canada)."



- Do not leave an infant sleeping in a playpen for extended periods of time.
- The side height of a playpen must be 48 cm (18.9 in) or more.
- The mesh openings of a playpen should be less than 6.4 cm (1/4 in) in diameter to prevent fingers or buttons from getting caught in the mesh.
- Ensure that a playpen doesn't have any sharp edges or hinges that can catch fingers.
- Check playpens regularly for any loose or ripped materials and that all latches are securely in place and attached properly.
- Again, do not place any blankets, pillows, bumper pads, or stuffed animals in the playpen as they could cause suffocation.
- With both cribs and playpens ensure that they are set up away from window blinds or curtain cords to prevent strangulation.
- Ensure that toys and mobiles are placed out of the infant's reach.

SAFETY GATES

- Baby gates manufactured before 1990 comprised of large V- or diamond-shaped openings at the top or sides do not meet current safety regulations and should not be used.
- Spacing in the gate should be small enough to prevent a child from getting caught. The holes should also be such that the child can not use them to assist with climbing over the gate.
- Safety gates should be installed at the top and bottom of the stairs before the child starts crawling. One never knows when that first crawl will be.
- Install baby gates according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Safety gates located at the top of a stairs should be anchored to the wall or banister as this is more secure than a pressure gate which can fall over if leaned on.
- Use safety gates made for blocking stairways and have latches to open them.
- Most safety gates can only be used for children under the age of two. Make sure you follow the recommended ages for the gate you are using.
- All safety gates should be removed once a child tries to climb over them.



BABY WALKERS

- Wheeled baby walkers have been **banned** in Canada since 2004 because of the serious injuries and deaths that resulted from using them.
- Baby walkers are not sold in Canada. It is illegal to sell, give away, advertise or import new or used baby walkers in Canada.
Refer to Facts for Garage Sale Vendors included in the resources or at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/garage_e.html
- If you have a baby walker remove the seating and disable it so that it can not be used by anyone else prior to disposing.

BABY BATH SEATS & RINGS

Infant bath seats and bath rings pose a drowning hazard. Numerous drownings and near-misses have been associated with their use. As a result, they are no longer recommended.

These products are designed to hold a baby sitting in the bathtub. They have a plastic seat or ring which the baby is placed in. The seat or ring is held in place by suction cups that attach to the bottom of the tub or by an arm that attaches to the side of the tub. These products are not safety devices and can give care providers a false sense of security.

- If you choose to use these products, make sure the child is able to sit up on his/her own. Bath seats and rings should never be used once the child can pull him/herself to a standing position.
- If used, babies **must** be carefully supervised **at all times** and be within arm's reach of the caregiver.
- **Never** leave a young child unattended in the bathtub.
- **Always take the baby with you if you need to leave the room.**

SUFFOCATION OR CHOKING

- Store all plastic bags (garbage bags, sandwich bags, grocery bags) out of children's reach.
- Remove bibs before taking children out of their high chairs.
- Ensure children are supervised and sitting down at all times when eating.



- Young children vary in their ability to chew and swallow. Modifying the presentation of some foods can prevent choking, especially for children under 3 years. Make sure all foods are cut into small pieces before children eat them—cut grapes into quarters; wieners/sausages into strips and then into small pieces; and cut vegetables into narrow strips or grate them. Avoid giving popcorn and hard candies.
- Never pin or tie pacifiers to children.
- Ensure all curtain/blind cords are tied up with clips or ties.
- Remove drawstrings or cords on children’s clothing.
- Check blankets and clothes for loose threads or buttons and remove or fix them immediately.
- Do not use baby powder. It isn’t recommended due to safety issues if inhaled.
- Use balloons with extreme caution and keep out of reach of young children. Balloons are very dangerous if swallowed.

TOYS

Toys are a key part of play and safety is important. Make sure toys are suited to a child’s age and abilities. Here are some tips to keep in mind.

- Keep children under 3 away from small toys or toys with small parts. If a toy fits through the hole of a toilet paper roll, it is too small and should be removed.
- Inspect toys often for worn out, loose or broken pieces as well as those with scratched or cloudy plastic. Dispose or replace them as needed.
- Keep antique toys out of reach. Safety standards have improved over the years and lead-based paint was used on toys at one time.
- Ensure that toys are kept in an open container to avoid injuries from closing lids and to prevent a child being trapped inside a box. If a toy box has a lid, ensure there are holes in the sides so a trapped child would not suffocate. Ensure the lid has a hinge to hold it open. Ensure the lid is lightweight to minimize injuries should it fall.
- Toys, child products and other items are sometimes recalled due to various safety concerns. Sign up to receive free recall notices from Health Canada: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/advisories-avis/_subscribe-abonnement/index-eng.php



- Batteries can be very dangerous if swallowed, especially small button batteries. Ensure batteries are enclosed in secure inaccessible compartments in toys. Dispose or repair if accessible.
- Children's jewelry can contain lead despite this being regulated by the government. Such items also pose a choking hazard to young children. Keep jewelry and key chains away from young children
- Many toys now contain very strong magnets. These should be kept away from children under 6 years of age. If swallowed, magnets can attract each other across the intestine causing serious illness or death.

POISONS

Many substances are hazardous to young children. Some products are more poisonous than others, but all should be considered potentially dangerous where small children are concerned. Chemicals which may only irritate an adult's skin can cause extreme danger to an infant.

Drugs:

- Keep all medications out of reach in a locked cupboard or cabinet.
- Use containers with safety lids. Remember, these are child resistant, not necessarily child-proof. Such containers are designed to make it harder for children to open them.
- Read labels carefully before giving any medication. Always follow the recommended dosage for a child's age and weight.
- Always leave medication in its original container.
- Never refer to medicine as candy.
- Return expired or unused medications to the pharmacy for safe disposal.

Chemicals:

- Store chemicals in a locked or inaccessible location.
- Choose child resistant containers whenever possible.
- Leave products in their original containers.
- Safely discard products that have not been used in the last year.
- Do not mix cleaning products together. Chemical reactions can cause toxic fumes.



- Never leave substances unattended. It only takes a few seconds for a child to ingest a potential poison.
- Teach children to recognize and to avoid dangerous products.

Regulated chemical products have hazard symbols on their labels:



Flammable



Corrosive



Poison



Explosive

PLANTS

Many plants are poisonous. Know the names of the plants at your daycare, indoors and out and exclude any that may be poisonous. Place house plants where they are inaccessible. Monitor children closely when outdoors and teach them not to put any plant material in their mouths.

Contact your Canadian Certified Playground Inspector or Public Health Inspector if you are unsure of the safety of any particular plant. Also, review the toxic plant list included in the resource safety package.

SUN SAFETY

While everyone loves to enjoy the sun and warmth of a nice day, too much of a good thing can be dangerous. Sun damage and heat stress are issues that every care provider must deal with in the summer. Young children are at an increased risk of sunburn as well as heat stress because of their immature skin and small size.

It is important to protect children from the sun's harmful UV rays all year round. Sunburns can occur even on cloudy days. Up to 80% of the sun's rays can penetrate light clouds, mist and fog. The sun's harmful UV rays bounce off of sand, snow and concrete adding to everyone's UV exposure.

When Is It Too Hot Or Sunny For Outdoor Activity?

Playing or working where it is too hot can cause problems for anyone. Heat puts stress on our body's cooling system. Children are more likely than adults to lose body fluid and become dehydrated (dry). They are also more at risk of developing heat stroke, a



dangerous result of untreated heat stress. Playing in an outdoor play area that is sunny and protected from the wind can result in more heat stress than playing in an area that is shaded and exposed to summer breezes. Playing inside on extremely hot, sunny days is a safe alternative, especially when the sun is at its peak from 11 am to 4 pm.

Sunburn can permanently damage the skin. Similarly, a suntan is also a sign of skin damage. Both increase a child's risk of developing skin cancers later in life. On a hot day, the sun can also overheat surfaces such as metal and asphalt. Children can be burned simply by touching them.

To Protect Infants and Children From Over-exposure To Sun And Heat:

- Keep children under 1 year of age out of direct sunlight.
- Do not use sunscreen on babies under 6 months of age (a baby is likely to absorb more of the product through his/her skin than an older child would).
- Avoid outdoor activity on really hot days when the temperature is hottest, 11 am to 4 pm.
- Ensure children and adults wear wide-brimmed hats when in the sun. Dress children in light-weight, light-colored clothing particularly on hot days. Clothes with a tighter weave to the fabric provide the most protection. As well, un protective clothing has become widely available for all ages and is useful for events involving lengthy sun exposure (excursions or days at the beach).
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks out UVA and UVB rays (it should say broad-spectrum on the label). Sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher is recommended. Sunscreen should always be used along with hats, clothing and shade, not in place of them.
- Whenever possible, apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outside. The active ingredients need time to work. Cover exposed areas generously, including ears, nose, neck, the tops of feet and backs of knees.
- Remember to reapply sunscreen frequently – at least every 2 hours and after swimming or exercising outside.
- Apply carefully around the eyes, avoiding eyelids. Children tend to rub their eyes, and stinging can be a problem.
- Choose or create shaded areas for activities. Trees, shade umbrellas and canopies are good examples.
- Ensure children wear UV protective sunglasses to block harmful UV rays and protect their eyes. Do not use sunglasses that do not protect against UVA/UVB radiation. You must check the label to see if this protection is included.



- Ensure children drink fluids before and after outdoor play. If they are thirsty while outside, allow them to drink right away. Thirst can be an early signal that dehydration is starting.
- Closely observe children in wheelchairs who are wearing shorts. Their bare thighs may need to be covered periodically with a light cloth or towel to prevent sunburn. The vinyl and metal of the wheelchair can also become very warm. Apply sunscreen liberally, at least every 2 hours if skin is not covered.
- Balance vigorous play with quiet play to allow natural cooling of the body.

ANIMAL BITE PREVENTION

Each year, approximately 350 people are bitten or scratched by dogs and cats in the City of Thunder Bay and the surrounding district communities. Unfortunately, many of the victims are children who are more likely to receive medical attention for the bite. Some biting incidents result in serious injuries and/or psychological wounds that can last a lifetime.

Animal bites are a largely preventable public health problem, and adults and children can learn to reduce their risk of an animal bite. The Health Unit has recently collaborated with the City of Thunder Bay's Animal Services program, the Thunder Bay and District Humane Society and the Thunder Bay Veterinary Hospital to promote animal bite prevention.

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit has provided all licensed day care programs with a resource kit, "Be Pet Aware". The goal of the kit is to provide your staff with valuable resources that can be used to teach children, and their parents, the steps they can take to reduce the risk of a bite by a domestic animal.

The kit, in a convenient hanging bag, includes a sample lesson plan; two activity pages that can be used to reinforce key messages; a colouring/activity page and an information card that can be sent home for review by parents/guardians; and a story book, "Tails Are Not For Pulling". New resources will be added to the kit each year.

With the exception of the story book, limited copies of the other resources are available by calling 625-8318 or toll free 1-888-293-6630, ext. 8318.

If a child is bitten by an animal while under the supervision of day care staff, the bite **MUST BE REPORTED** to the Health Unit by calling 625-8318 or 1-888-293-6630, ext. 8318.



The above safety information was adapted from the following resources:

Health Canada, "Is Your Child Safe?" (2006)
Product Safety, Consumer Product Recalls, Child Care Equipment and Children's
Furniture and Facts for Garage Sale Vendors
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/child-enfant/equip/index_e.html

Thunder Bay District Health Unit, "Home Safety Checklist"
www.tbdhu.com/Safety/SafeKids/

Transport Canada- "Safety in the Car"
www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety

Ontario Ministry of Transportation, "Safe and Secure: Choosing the Right Car Seat"
(2005); www.mto.gov.on.ca

The Canadian Cancer Society, "SunSense: Preventing Skin Cancer" (May, 2007)
www.cancer.ca

The Canadian Dermatology Association, "Tips for Daycares & Tips for Parents"
www.dermatology.ca