

# Baby Walkers: What You Need to Know

Baby walkers send thousands of children to hospitals every year. Read about why they are not safe and what you can do.

## Children in baby walkers can

- Roll down the stairs—which often causes broken bones and severe head injuries. This is how most children get hurt in baby walkers.
- Get burned—a child can reach higher in a walker. It is now easier for a child to pull a tablecloth off a table and spill hot coffee, grab pot handles off the stove, and reach radiators, fireplaces, or space heaters.
- Drown—a child can fall into a pool or bathtub while in a walker.
- Be poisoned—reaching high objects is easier in a walker.

Most walker injuries happen while adults are watching. Parents or caregivers simply cannot respond quickly enough. A child in a walker can move more than 3 feet in 1 second! That is why walkers are never safe to use, even with an adult close by.

## There are no benefits to baby walkers

Many parents think walkers will help their children learn to walk. But they don't. In fact, walkers can actually delay when a child starts to walk.

## What you can do

- Throw out your baby walkers! Also, be sure that there are no walkers wherever your child is being cared for, such as child care centers or in someone else's home.
- Try something just as enjoyable but safer, like
  - Stationary activity centers—they look like walkers but have no wheels. They usually have seats that rotate, tip, and bounce.
  - Play yards or playpens—these are great safety zones for children as they learn to sit, crawl, or walk.
  - High chairs—older children often enjoy sitting up in a high chair and playing with toys on the tray.

## About safety standards

New safety standards for baby walkers have been in place since 1997. They are now made wider so they cannot fit through most doors, or they have brakes to stop them at the edge of a step. However, these improvements will not prevent all injuries from walkers. They still have wheels, so children can still move fast and reach higher.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has called for a ban on the manufacture and sale of baby walkers with wheels.

## Remember

One way you can keep your child safe from injury is to throw away your baby walker.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

## From your doctor

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