

delay walking, they give too much support and do not allow for natural strength and movement and can promote tip toe walking. However, if these are used limit the amount of time your child spends in this and only use if your child can already sit up without help and when placed in standing, can stand straight with both feet flat on the floor.

### OTHER TYPES OF BABY EQUIPMENT

Your baby enjoys getting out and about as much as you do, even the smallest trips provide constant sources of amusement for your little one. Whether you're taking baby out for an hour of errands or for a week-long vacation, their comfort and safety require preparation.

### VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE!

The fundamental principle of ergonomics is to change position often. Limit the amount of time your baby spends in any position or in any one piece of equipment to avoid your baby getting a flat spot on their head and to give plenty of opportunity for movement and development.

### BABY SEATS, GENERAL COMMENTS

Always read the manufacturer's instructions for any child safety seat/equipment as well as your vehicle's owner manual to make sure you are installing the seat in the vehicle correctly and for height and weight.

1. Never leave an infant or child alone in a child safety seat, either in or out of the vehicle.
2. Child safety seats are also known as "car seats", "child restraints", "infant seats", "pumpkin seats", "convertible seats", and "booster seats".

LATEST RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PAEDIATRICS (AAP) ON TYPES OF CAR SAFETY SEATS		
AGE GROUP	TYPE OF SEAT	GENERAL GUIDLINES
Infants/Toddlers	Infant seats and rear-facing convertible seats	All infants and toddlers should ride in a Rear-Facing Car Safety Seat until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
Toddlers/Preschoolers	Convertible seats and forward-facing seats with harnesses	All children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a Forward-Facing Car Safety Seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
School-aged children	Booster seats	All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a Belt-Positioning Booster Seat until the vehicle seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.
Older children	Seat belts	When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use Lap and Shoulder Seat Belts for optimal protection.  All children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the Rear Seats of vehicles for optimal protection.

- Baby slings/carriers/wraps (i.e babybjorn): baby slings are used as small children have an enormous need for closeness in the form of body and eye contact with their parents. Research has shown that this is essentially important from birth and during the first 5–6 months of life. Besides having a positive effect on sleep, nursing and digestion, this closeness reinforces the emotional bond between parents and child. According to leading pediatricians, the essential prerequisite for a sensitive newborn, is that the baby carrier provides proper support for the head and neck, an upright body position to ensure the free passage of air, as well as the correct position for the child's legs, which should be turned slightly outwards and not locked into one place. Therefore, a newborn child should be carried facing the adult carrier and only changed to forward facing

position when the child's neck muscles have grown strong enough.

- Once your baby has learned to sit independently, high chairs are an alternative – allowing them to sit and play with toys on a tray in front of them and practise skills with their hands.
- Your baby can play safely in an infant swing and might even be lulled to sleep by the constant movement.

Choose the safest activity centers, play pens and swings by looking for those certified by the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JMPA)

**For more information please contact  
Community Rehabilitation,  
Department of Health at  
278-6427**

# KEEP YOUR INFANT SAFE!



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA  
Ministry of Health and Seniors  
**Department of Health**



# DON'T USE A BABY WALKER!

**M**any parents love the idea of using baby walkers for their young child. After all, they keep children busy and happy and away from hazards in the home, right? Not so, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. In fact, they are extremely dangerous. The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP), the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy and the Australian Physiotherapy Association discourage the use of baby walkers. The Canadian Government instituted a ban in April 2004 on advertising, importing and selling used and new walkers.

## DID YOU KNOW:

Infants living in a home with a baby walker are *nine times* more likely to suffer a serious injury?

## ACCIDENTS:

Most walker-related accidents happen while a parent or guardian is present. Babies can move at a rate of three feet per second in a walker, making it difficult for adults to act quickly enough to prevent accidents from happening. The most recent statistics show there were more than 3,600 injuries to children aged four and under — three out of four involving infants falling down stairs and suffering head injuries serious enough to require hospitalization. An average of two children per year die from such accidents. While these statistics are not gathered in Bermuda, child safety and ways to prevent injury cannot be overlooked. There are many ways a child can get injured when using a baby walker:

- Falling down stairs (involved in 75 per cent of injuries)
- Getting burned by a stove, fireplace or radiator
- Poisoning
- Drowning
- Choking
- Getting fingers or toes caught in the walker

## SAFETY TIPS

**DON'T** purchase a used baby walker or accept a hand-me-down. Walkers built before 1997 are especially dangerous because they don't include the necessary safety measures.

**DON'T** buy a new walker either. New walkers will not prevent all injuries and some still don't comply with voluntary industry standards.

## DO BABY WALKERS PROMOTE WALKING?

It is a myth that baby walkers help a child walk. Studies show baby walkers do not help children walk sooner. If anything, they have the opposite effect and can delay your child's mental and motor development. A survey at University College Dublin School of Physiotherapy found that, for each 24 hours that babies toddled along in walkers, their ability to walk independently was delayed by more than three days. Another study, "Effects of baby walkers on motor and mental development in human infants", concluded that 'walker-experienced infants sat, crawled, and walked later than no-walker controls, and they scored lower on the Bayley scales of mental and motor development.'

The use of baby walkers does not allow the baby to practise the natural development of body control that they learn by being placed on the floor. Walkers give babies too much support. They do not allow a child to strengthen the muscle groups needed for sitting, crawling and walking, therefore delaying the development of these skills. The muscles used to propel a walker are different to the muscles and co-ordination needed to walk independently. Baby walkers can encourage infants to walk on their toes, which can cause tight heel and leg muscles.

Your baby might also show a decreased interest in walking without assistance if they are used to getting around in a walker. Their sense of balance and ability to pick themselves up after falling could also be hindered by frequent walker use, since they are constantly propped up. Sitting in a walker also prevents your baby

from seeing how their feet and legs move when they walk. Without these visual clues, they'll have more trouble figuring out how to walk on their own.

## OTHER ALTERNATIVES

There are safer alternatives; the important thing to consider is to provide your baby with a wide variety of opportunities to play, not only to help balance their muscle development to help with movement, but to offer a wide experience to help mental development.



## PHYSIOTHERAPISTS RECOMMEND

- Supervised floor play is the most fun and enjoyable. Here your baby can practise and learn all the movements needed for rolling, sitting, crawling, cruising and standing. A playpen will give your baby space to move and will create a safer area for your child if you need to leave them unsupervised for a short period of time.
- Stationary activity centres have no wheels, but the seats rotate round in a circle and the child can play with toys that are attached to them. Although these are safer than baby walkers, physiotherapists discourage the use of stationary activity centres. The reasons are the same as the advice previously stated on baby walkers. Stationary baby walkers do not expedite motor development and can actually