

# Baby walkers

- Baby walkers sent an estimated 8,800 children younger than 15 months to the hospital in 1999.
- Thirty-four children died during the years of 1973 through 1998 because of baby walkers.

## 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 when in a walker. A cup of hot coffee on the table, pot handles on the stove, a radiator, a fireplace, or a space heater are all now in baby's reach.
- Drown — a child can fall into a pool, bathtub, or toilet while in a walker.
- Be poisoned — reaching high objects is easier in a walker.

## There are no benefits to baby walkers

You may think a walker can help your child learn to walk. But walkers do not help children walk sooner. In fact, walkers can delay normal muscle control and mental development.

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! Therefore, walkers are never safe to use, even with close adult supervision. Make sure there are no walkers at home or wherever your child is being cared for. Child care facilities should not allow the use of baby walkers. If your child is in child care at a center or at someone else's home, make sure there are no walkers.

## Throw out your baby walkers!

Try something just as enjoyable but safer, such as the following:

- "Stationary walkers" — have no wheels but have seats that rotate, tip, and bounce.
- Playpens — 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.

On July 1, 1997, new safety standards were implemented for baby walkers. Walkers are now made wider so they cannot fit through most doorways, or are made with a braking mechanism to stop them at the edge of a step. But these new walker designs 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 and the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions have called for a ban on the manufacture and sale of baby walkers with wheels. *Keep your child safe... 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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