

Keeping children safe

Multicultural Parent Easy Guide 04

ENGLISH



Children can often be harmed in accidents. Most of these can be prevented. What parents do to keep children safe in Australia may be different to your homeland. It's important that parents:

- > make their home and yard safe for children
- > make sure that children are well supervised
- > help children learn how to keep themselves safe.

Safety first

In Australia, accidents are the biggest cause of death and injury for children under 15 years. Most injuries to young children happen at home.

Make your home safe

Make your home and yard safe by:

- > removing things such as sharp objects that could hurt children
- > keeping medicines and poisons locked away
- > putting up barriers to unsafe places such as swimming pools or open fires
- > keeping emergency numbers near the phone.

Supervise children

One of the best ways to keep children safe is to keep a close watch on them at all times. If you can't be with your children, make sure they're with someone you trust.

Teach children about safety

Telling children about danger is not enough. Very young children don't understand they can be hurt. Show children how to do things safely. Always do things the safe way yourself so they learn from you.

Leaving children home alone

Parents can be taken to court if a child is harmed from being left alone or not well supervised. The Police or Families SA can remove children from the home or other places where they are in serious danger.¹

In some cultures children are cared for by older brothers and sisters. If you leave children with

The most common things that cause injury or death of children are:

- > road accidents
- > drowning
- > falls
- > poisons
- > burns and scalds
- > choking and suffocating
- > violence

someone, you must be sure they know what to do in an emergency.

They need to know:

- > where you are going, when you will be back and how to contact you
- > the address and phone number of the house in case they need to get help
- > to call **000** for police, fire or ambulance in an emergency.

Smoking

Smoking is harmful to health. If you smoke around children they breathe in the smoke and this harms them. The best thing you can do for children is stop smoking. It's also best to stop if you or your partner is pregnant.

Quitting can be hard to do. People often try many times before they stop for good. Call the Quitline on 13 78 48 for help.

It is against the law in South Australia to smoke in a car if there are children under 16 years old with you.²

Helping parents be their best



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SA Health

Car and road safety

Seat belts

Under Australian law, drivers can be fined and lose points from their licence if anyone in the car is not restrained properly.³ This means that:

- > adults, including pregnant women, must wear a seat-belt
- > babies up to at least six months of age must be in the back seat in a rearward-facing restraint or 'baby capsule'
- > children from 6 months to 4 years must be in either a rearward-facing baby restraint or a forward-facing child safety seat with an in-built harness
- > children under 4 years must travel in the back seat of the car. Children between 4 and 7 years must travel in either a forward facing child safety seat or a booster seat
- > children between 4 and 7 years must only ride in the front if younger children are taking up all places in the back seat.

All child restraints must meet Australian Standards. If using a restraint that is not new make sure it meets the Standard, that it is less than 10 years old and is in good order.

Driving with children

Make sure:

- > you always stop the car when you need to attend to a child
- > there is nothing loose on the dashboard or seats that could hurt a child if there is a crash
- > you secure big or heavy items
- > your child gets in and out of the car on the footpath side, away from the traffic
- > the child-proof locks are turned on so children can't get out of the car when it is moving.

Leaving children in cars

It's dangerous to leave children or babies alone in a car, even for a short time. Parked cars can quickly get very hot. Children can die.

Teach children road safety

It takes time for a child to learn how to be safe on the road. Don't expect them to get it right all the time until at least 10 years of age. It's important to:

- > always keep a close watch on children near traffic
- > hold the hand of children under 5 when crossing roads
- > teach children aged 5 to 9 years to cross roads using the 'stop, look, listen and think' rules. Set a good example and do this yourself. Explain road signs and where it is safe to cross the road
- > never call your child from the other side of the road
- > never leave your child alone in the driveway. When moving the car secure them in the back seat.

Safety on bikes

When children are using bikes, make sure they:

- > know the road rules
- > ride a bike that is safe and works well
- > wear a helmet – this is the law. Make sure helmets meet the Australian standard
- > are supervised on bikes until they are at least 10 years old
- > only ride in daylight and wear bright clothes
- > don't ride with a second person on the bike.

These safety tips also apply for roller skates, scooters and skateboards.

Drowning

Most children who drown are under 4 years old. Children can drown in a home bath, swimming pool, rain water tank, river, dam, fish pond or at the beach. Even things with just a little bit of water are a risk. Make sure you:

- > always keep a close watch on children around water, and don't drink alcohol
- > get rid of hazards, for example leave baths or buckets empty when not in use
- > put fences around swimming pools. These need to meet Australian laws⁴
- > teach children how to swim but still watch them all the time
- > learn to swim yourself and learn how to resuscitate. Quick action in the first few minutes can save a life.

Falls

Children may:

- > fall off furniture
- > fall off play equipment
- > be dropped by someone holding them
- > fall over when running.

Don't leave young children alone on a bed or change table when changing nappies, in a high chair, or when playing on outdoor play equipment.

Poisons

Children can be harmed by eating or drinking poisons at home. Keep cleaning or garden products, cigarettes, alcohol and medicines in locked cupboards or where children can't reach them. Never store cleaning products or other harmful substances in drink bottles. Children may drink them by mistake.

If you think your child has swallowed something harmful, call the 24-hour **Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26**. It helps to have the poison bottle with you when you call.

Burns

Children are often burned by hot tea or coffee, hot foods, hot tap water, or by heaters or fires. Keep young children away from these. Teach them not to touch or go near stoves, heaters, hot water and flames. Don't have hot drinks near you when holding your baby.

House fires

Reduce the risk of a fire in your home by:

- > practicing a fire safety plan with the whole family
- > keeping matches and lighters out of the reach of children and making sure cigarette butts are put out
- > having smoke alarms near the sleeping areas, and checking them often
- > staying in the kitchen when there are pots cooking on the stove
- > not leaving candles burning
- > checking that the electrical wiring in the house is safe
- > putting a guard around open fires or heaters.

Choking

Food

Babies and young children can choke on small or hard pieces of food. Foods such as raw carrots, celery sticks or apples should be grated, cooked or mashed. Keep foods such as popcorn, nuts, hard lollies, corn chips or whole grapes away from young children. Sausages and frankfurts should be cut into small pieces and tough skins removed.

Small objects

Children love to put things in their mouth. It is one of the ways they learn. This means small objects are a big risk, including toys with small parts and small button batteries. Button batteries can be in TV remote controls, watches, games or children's toys. They can cause internal burns within 2 hours if they get stuck.

Take your child to the Emergency Department of your nearest hospital if you think they have swallowed a button battery or other small object.

Safe sleeping for babies

Babies can sometimes die in their sleep. Keep babies safe by:

- > sleeping them on their back, not on their tummy or side
- > making sure their face and head is not covered
- > keeping them smoke free before and after birth
- > sleeping them in a cot next to your bed for the first 6–12 months. Don't sleep with them on a bed, lounge chair, couch or bean bag
- > using a safe cot that meets the Australian Standards. Make sure it is away from any blinds with cords, that the mattress is a snug fit and the bedding is tucked in well.

Violence and abuse

At times children are harmed or die as a result of physical or sexual assault, or from neglect by families. Child abuse and neglect is against the law.⁵

If you think your child is in danger, call the **Police on 000** or the **Child Abuse Report Line on 13 14 78**.

Sun safety

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. The sun can burn you in less than 15 minutes even if it is cloudy or not very hot. Sunlight through the glass of car windows can burn too.

The sun is most harmful from September to April. During these months:

- > keep your children in the shade where possible, especially between 10 am and 3 pm
- > make sure they wear a shady hat and loose, cool clothing that covers their skin
- > use small amounts of sunscreen (30+ SPF) that is labelled "for toddlers or children".

We all need some sun on our skin to get enough Vitamin D for strong and healthy bones. In summer, people with fair skin need a few minutes of sunlight each day on their face, arms and hands. This should be before 10 am or after 3 pm. In winter people need about two to three hours a week of sunlight on their face, hands and arms.

People with dark skin or those who cover themselves for religious or cultural reasons may not get enough Vitamin D from the sun. Talk to your doctor if you are worried about your child's Vitamin D levels.

Children and pets

Pets can be a big part of family life in Australia but there can be risks. Keep a close watch on children under 5 when they are around dogs and cats. If you can't do this it's best to keep pets and young children apart.

Don't let dogs or cats sleep in a young child's room. They could smother the child.

1, 5 Children's Protection Act 1993

2 Tobacco Products Regulation Act 1997

3 Road Traffic Act 1961

4 Minister's Specification SA 76D; Swimming Pools Safety Act 1972

Emergency contacts

Police, ambulance or fire
Phone 000

Poisons Information Centre
Phone 13 11 26
24 hours

Healthdirect
Phone 1800 022 222, 24 hours
Health advice from Registered Nurses.
An interpreter service is available

Domestic Violence Helpline
Phone 1800 800 098, 24 hours
For people experiencing family violence

Child Abuse Report Line
Phone 13 14 78, 24 hours
To report child abuse or neglect, or female genital mutilation

Migrant Women's Support Service
Phone (08) 8346 9417
Support and referral for migrant women and children experiencing family violence

Want more information?

Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia
Phone (08) 8217 9510, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm
www.mrcsa.com.au
Information, counselling, referral and community education for migrant and refugee families.

> **Northern Area Migrant Resource Centre**
28 Mary Street
Salisbury SA 5108
Phone (08) 8283 0844

> **Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre**
5 Second Street
Murray Bridge SA 5253
Phone (08) 8532 3922

> **Limestone Coast Migrant Resource Centre**
13 Eleanor Street
Mount Gambier SA 5290
Phone (08) 8725 2753

Migrant Health Service
Phone (08) 8237 3900, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm
Health services for migrants and refugees

Child and Family Health Centres:
Phone 1300 733 606 Mon–Fri 9am–4.30pm
For an appointment at your local Centre

Parent Helpline: Phone 1300 364 100
Advice on child development and parenting

Red Cross Baby Seats
Phone (08) 8443 9700
Advice, buying, hiring, fitting of child restraints
www.redcross.org.au

www.kidsafesa.com.au
Information on keeping babies and children safe and safety products for sale

www.sidsandkids.org
Information on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and safe sleeping

www.stjohn.org.au
Information on first aid

www.quitsa.org.au
For help with quitting smoking

www.decd.sa.gov.au
Department for Education and Child Development
Education and early childhood care and services

www.dcsi.sa.gov.au
Families SA
Information on child protection and family support

www.sa.gov.au
Information on road safety, home and community safety, immunisations

www.cyh.com
Information on child health and parenting

www.parenting.sa.gov.au
For more Parent Easy Guides including 'Child safety', and parent groups in your area

www.raisingchildren.net.au
Information on raising children

Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Telephone (08) 8217 9510

Parenting SA
Women's and Children's Health Network
Telephone (08) 8303 1660
www.parenting.sa.gov.au

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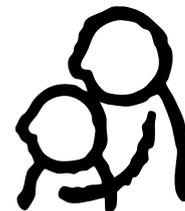
Parent Easy Guides are free in South Australia

Important: This information is not intended to replace advice from a qualified practitioner.

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