



Safety in the home - Suffocation and strangulation

There are a number of hazards in the home which can cause suffocation or strangulation in babies and children.

The following points help to identify potential hazards:

- Keep all plastic bags out of reach, including nappy sacks. Nappy sacks are particularly dangerous as they do not rustle in the same way that a plastic bag does, and can easily be grasped and breathed in by a baby without their parent noticing. Never store your nappy sacks in or around your baby's cot, pram or anywhere within your baby or toddler's reach.
- Keep an eye out for burst or unfilled balloons when at birthday parties – these can be hazardous for small children as they can completely block a child's airway if chewed or inhaled.
- Do not tie a dummy to your baby's clothes or use teething beads or other necklaces as the tie or ribbon could strangle them.
- Keep family pets out of your child's bedroom. Cats in particular pose a suffocation risk so use a net cover around the Moses basket and pram while your baby is sleeping.
- Babies and small children can become entangled in blind cords so it's vital to keep blind cords and chains short and out of reach. If possible, install a blind that does not have a cord. Never cut blind cords yourself to shorten them but use a cord tidy or cleat to keep them out of your child's reach.

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For additional Parent Tips see www.ihv.org.uk

The information in this resource was updated on 30/05/2019 and will be reviewed again in 05/2021 and when new evidence becomes available.

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- Don't hang toys or other objects (bunting, for example) that could be a strangulation hazard on your child's cot or bed.
- If you use a sling, follow the TICKS advice for the safe use of baby slings.
T - keep your baby Tight.
I - In view.
C - Close enough to kiss.
K - Keep their chin off their chest.
S - with a Supported back.
- Avoid leaving rope or cord from dressing gowns or drawstring bags around as these can be a strangulation hazard.
- If gaps between banister or balcony railings are more than 6.5cms wide, cover them with boards or safety netting as babies may be able to squeeze their bodies through.
- Reduce the risk of suffocation when sleeping, by adopting the following:
 - do not use pillows or duvets with babies under 12 months;
 - ensure sheets and blankets are firmly tucked in (not above shoulder height) or baby sleep bags are safe for a baby to sleep in;
 - do not place soft toys or use cot bumpers in cots; and
 - remember to place babies on their back to sleep with their feet at the foot of the cot.
- If you have any worries or questions about safety around the home or when on holiday, your health visitor can offer advice which follows current safety guidelines.

More information:

For more information on child safety, visit the CAPT website:
www.capt.org.uk

For comprehensive advice on safety for babies and toddlers, visit the NHS website:
<https://nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/baby-safety-tips>

For further advice on the use of baby slings, visit:
www.babyslingsafety.co.uk

For further advice on safe sleeping, visit:
www.lullabytrust.org.uk

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