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SAFETY ALERT

Baby walkers

Titles in the child safety series

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Baby walkers

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SAFETY HAZARD

Baby walkers

Baby walkers can be dangerous as they allow infants to move more quickly around the house and grab things normally out of their reach. Their new mobility and added height can place your child in dangerous situations with access to bench tops and the potential to pull boiling kettles or irons down onto themselves, fall down stairs or reach open fires or heaters. A baby in a walker can also tip over on uneven surfaces.

Before you buy

- ✔ Check for compliance with the mandatory safety standard for baby walkers based on the US ASTM F977 safety standard for baby walkers. Look for a label or sticker that says the baby walker complies with the mandatory standard. If there isn't one, ask the retailer. If the retailer cannot verify that it complies, ask if there is an alternative that does comply.
- ✔ Older second-hand baby walkers may not comply with the national safety standard introduced in November 2002 and other state and territory legislation. The safety standard requires baby walkers to have minimum levels of stability, an automatic braking system (so they cannot be easily ridden down stairs), and safety warning labels.
- ✔ Check that warning labels about safe use are clearly displayed.
- ✔ Look for an automatic braking mechanism to prevent it being ridden over a step.
- ✔ Check that any folding mechanism latches securely and will not collapse when assembled.
- ✔ Check that there are no sharp edges or points or places that can trap fingers.
- ✔ Check that your child fits properly into the baby walker.
- ✔ Look for a baby walker with an optional locking device to immobilise the baby walker when required.



Safety at home

- ✘ Never leave your child in a walker unsupervised. Your child in a walker should be within the reach of an adult at all times so they can prevent the child accessing hazardous locations.
- ✘ Do not leave the child in the walker for more than 15 minutes. Overuse of the walker can lead to developmental delays when the child is learning to walk.
- ✔ Baby walkers should only be used in a safe and flat area. Block off access to areas such as staircases, kitchens and fireplaces.
- ✔ Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.

Child safety experts recommend a stationary play centre as a safer alternative.