

Safe Use of Infant Play Equipment

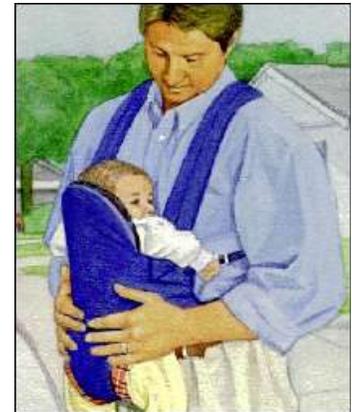
Infant equipment is often used to help support a baby before they are strong enough to do things on their own.

All ages. Car seats

- Car seats are required for transportation. They should not replace a crib or Pack'N Play® for sleeping, unless your baby's doctor says it is okay.

Newborns (0 to 3 months old). Bouncy seats, swings, Boppy® pillows and front carriers.

- Newborns and young infants have little head control. Their heads can fall to one side or the other. Be sure to support their heads.
- **Boppy®** pillows can be used for tummy time as long as the baby is supervised.
- Limit time for babies in **swings, bouncy seats and car seats**. These items keep babies lying on their backs.
- Long-term pressure on the back or side of your baby's head often makes a flat spot on the head. Flat heads are less likely if your baby is:
 - Held while carried.
 - Carried in an infant carrier like a **sling or Baby Bjorn®**.
 - Given time to play on their tummy while they are awake.



Babies that can hold their head up and sit up with support (3 to 6 months old). Boppy®, and Bumbo® chairs. Babies need to be supervised when in these items.

- **Boppy®** pillows can be used to support your baby while sitting.
- **Bumbo®** chairs are soft chairs with support for babies who can hold their head up, but are not able to sit alone. **Watch your baby closely** while in these chairs. **Never** use these chairs on a raised surface like a table or counter-top.

Babies that can sit, roll, and try to crawl or pull to stand (over 6 months old).

ExerSaucers®, walkers and Jumperoos™.

- When using these items, be sure that your baby's feet are flat on the floor while they stand. Your baby should not hang on their arms while in these items.
- A baby should learn to roll, sit on their own, crawl, and pull to stand before standing and walking. These seats do not help your baby use their stomach and back muscles to get stronger. These muscles need to be strong to help with balance and support.
- These items will not necessarily help your baby learn to walk.

- Being in these items puts babies in a standing position. Often this is long before their bodies are actually ready to stand (around 8 to 9 months). Being in a standing position before their muscles are ready can cause movement problems when they are out of the equipment. Problems can include:
 - Standing up on toes or bouncing a lot.
 - Arching their neck and trunk/back or falling over to one side.
 - Pulling one or both arms back.

Notes: Infant walkers are not recommended. **Do not use a walker that was made before July, 1997** as it can fit through doorways. This makes it easy for babies to fall down stairs and cause head injuries, skull fractures, concussions, internal bleeding and death.

- Some studies have shown that:
 - The use of infant walkers may delay sitting, crawling and walking.
 - Infants who used a walker scored lower on tests of mental and motor development.
 - Walker use may delay the development of movement skills. They also may be a cause of developmental delay. If this happens, your baby may need physical or occupational therapy.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend the use of mobile infant walkers. Babies in mobile infant walkers move up to three feet in one second. This does not give a caregiver time to respond.

How should the equipment be used?

- Do not use any piece of equipment for more than 15 to 20 minutes at a time.
- **Never leave your baby alone** while they are in any equipment.
- Keep your baby away from anything that could cause choking or strangling.
- Babies should be given lots of time to play on the floor. Give your baby time on their tummy, back, and sitting. Be sure to clear away small objects that could be choking hazards before putting them down to play. This includes objects that fit into a toilet paper roll.

Important Safety Notes

Keep a close watch any time your baby is in a piece of play equipment.

- As babies get older, they may learn how to climb or crawl out of seats.
- Many of these items put babies higher off the ground. Babies are more able to reach and grab things such as cords, burners on the stove, items on kitchen counters, and hot pots of water.
- If your child falls asleep while in the infant equipment, take them out and put them in a crib or pack 'n play to sleep.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.