



Safe Beginnings, Strong Families

September is Baby Safety Month, a perfect time for parents and caregivers to take a fresh look at the everyday spaces where babies sleep, play, eat and explore.

Keeping a baby safe can feel like a moving target, and in many ways, it is! A newborn who stays where you place them soon becomes a curious baby who can roll, crawl, pull up and reach things you never expected. As babies grow and develop new skills, their surroundings need to change with them.

Start with safe sleep. Babies should sleep on their backs on a firm, flat sleep surface in a crib, bassinet or portable play yard that meets current safety standards. Keep the sleep area free of pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, bumper pads and other soft items.

Take a baby's-eye view of your home. Once your little one starts moving, get down on the floor and look around from their perspective. Are there electrical cords within reach? Small objects that could become choking hazards? Cleaning products or medications in low cabinets? Furniture or televisions that could tip over? A few minutes spent looking at your home from this new angle may reveal hazards that are easy for adults to overlook.

Check baby gear regularly. Make sure car seats, strollers, high chairs, cribs and other baby products are appropriate for your child's age and size and are being used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Be especially careful with secondhand items and check periodically for product recalls.

5 Things to Check Today



Is baby's crib or bassinet clear of blankets, pillows, bumpers, stuffed animals and other soft items?



Are electrical cords, blind cords and outlets safely out of baby's reach?



Are medications, cleaning products and other potentially harmful items locked up or stored well out of reach?



Are dressers, bookshelves and televisions secured so they can't tipover as baby begins pulling up and climbing?



Is your child's car seat appropriate for their age and size, installed correctly, and used properly on every ride?

One More Tip! Get down on your hands and knees and look around the room from your baby's point of view. You might be surprised by what suddenly looks interesting and reachable!

Buckle Up, Little One!

Child Passenger Safety Week is September 20–26, making it a great time to give your child's car seat a quick safety check.

Car seats save lives, but they work best when they're the right seat for your child's age and size, installed correctly and used properly on every trip.

Take a few minutes to check:

- Is the car seat installed tightly? It shouldn't move more than one inch from side to side or front to back at the belt path.
- Is the harness snug? You shouldn't be able to pinch extra harness material at your child's shoulder.
- Is the chest clip positioned at armpit level?
- Is your child still within the seat's height and weight limits?
- Is your child riding rear-facing for as long as the car seat manufacturer allows?



Not sure whether your car seat is installed correctly? A Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician can check your seat and show you how to use it correctly.



Easy Banana-Oat Pancakes

A quick breakfast or snack made with simple ingredients you may already have at home!

- Ingredients:**
- 1 ripe banana
 - 1 egg
 - ½ cup quick or rolled oats
 - ¼ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
 - A little oil or butter for the pan

- Directions:**
- Mash the banana well in a bowl. Add the egg and stir until combined. Mix in the oats and cinnamon.
 - Heat a lightly greased skillet over medium-low heat. Spoon small amounts of batter into the pan to make toddler-sized pancakes. Cook for about 2–3 minutes, then flip and cook until both sides are lightly golden and the egg is completely cooked.
 - Let cool before serving.

Make It Your Own! Try adding finely chopped or mashed blueberries, strawberries, or soft cooked apple. For older children, serve with fresh fruit or a thin spread of nut butter your child has safely eaten before. For babies and young toddlers, cut food into small, age-appropriate pieces and always supervise children while they eat.



StartSmart is designed to share practical tips and advice each month to help you nurture your baby's growth and development. From encouraging milestones to promoting healthy habits, **StartSmart** is here to support you every step of the way on your parenting journey!

StartSmart: 5 Easy Ways to Build Your Baby's Brain Every Day

Your baby's brain is growing at an amazing pace—and you are an important part of that development! The good news? Helping your baby learn doesn't require expensive toys, special lessons or complicated activities. Some of the best brain-building happens during the everyday moments you already share.

1

Talk, talk, talk! Tell your baby what you're doing as you change a diaper, prepare a bottle or take a walk. Name the things you see and respond to your baby's sounds and expressions. Even before babies can talk, hearing your words helps build the foundation for language.

2

Read together. It's never too early for books! Your baby may be more interested in touching—or chewing—the book than following the story, and that's okay. Point to pictures, name objects and let your baby hear the rhythm of your voice. A few minutes at a time is plenty.

3

Sing and play. Songs, peekaboo, pat-a-cake and silly faces are more than fun. They help babies practice listening, remembering, anticipating what comes next and interacting with you. Repetition is especially valuable, so don't worry if your baby wants the same song again and again!

4

Let your baby explore safely. Babies learn by seeing, touching, reaching, grasping and moving. Give your baby safe opportunities to explore different textures, shapes and sounds. Simple household objects such as plastic cups, wooden spoons and empty containers can provide plenty of discovery.

5

Follow your baby's lead. Notice what catches your baby's attention and join in. If your baby points at a dog, talk about the dog. If your toddler is fascinated by stacking cups, stack them together. These back-and-forth interactions help children learn while also strengthening their connection with you.

Small Moments Make a Big Difference

Every smile you return, song you sing, book you share and conversation you have helps your baby learn about the world. There's no need to turn every moment into a lesson—just talk, play, respond and enjoy being together. Those simple everyday connections are powerful building blocks for your child's growing brain.



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Important dates this month:

September 7 Labor Day

September 22 Autumn Equinox / First Day of Fall