



## Simple Steps for Safer Nights

October is SIDS Awareness Month, a good time to remind families that creating a safe sleep space is one of the most important things parents and caregivers can do for a baby.

A few simple steps today can help keep your baby safe for all their tomorrows:



### Back to Sleep

Always place your baby on their back for every sleep. That means naps and nighttime.



### A Safe Sleep Space

Use a firm, flat sleep surface in a crib, bassinet or play yard. Keep the area free of pillows, blankets, bumper pads and stuffed animals.



### Same Room, Separate Space

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies sleep in the same room as their parents, but on a separate sleep surface, ideally for at least the first six months.



### Keep It Comfortable

Dress your baby in light sleep clothing and keep their head and face uncovered to prevent overheating.

And remember: safe sleep recommendations apply wherever your baby sleeps—including at grandparents' homes, with a babysitter or while traveling.

## Taking Care of You Matters, Too

When you're caring for a new baby or keeping up with a busy toddler, it's easy to put your own health at the bottom of the list. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a good reminder that taking care of When you're caring for a new baby or keeping up with a busy toddler, it's easy to put your own health at the yourself matters, too.



Make time for regular medical care and talk with your healthcare provider about your personal and family health history and when breast cancer screening is appropriate for you. If you notice a new lump or other unusual breast change, don't wait for a routine appointment to bring it up.

Self-care doesn't have to mean finding hours of free time. It can start with making the appointment you've been postponing, asking someone for help when you need it, getting some movement into your day, or simply paying attention to what your body is telling you.

Your health is important, not only to you, but to the people who love and depend on you.

## A Safe & Happy Halloween for Little Ones

Halloween can be exciting for toddlers, but costumes, decorations, candy and unfamiliar faces can also be a lot for little ones to take in.

Choose costumes that fit well and don't interfere with walking or vision. If you'll be outside after dark, add reflective material or carry a flashlight so your family is easier to see.

For babies and young toddlers, pay special attention to candy and small toys that could be choking hazards. Keep candles, electrical cords and decorations with small removable pieces out of reach.

And don't worry if your little one isn't excited about trick-or-treating. Masks, costumes, loud noises and strangers can feel scary. Let your child participate at their own pace, even if that means simply wearing pajamas and handing out treats at home.

The best Halloween for a little one is one that's safe, comfortable and fun.



## Fall Sensory Fun

Turn a fall walk into a simple learning adventure by taking your toddler outside and collecting a few safe seasonal treasures together—colorful leaves, pinecones or small sticks. As you explore, talk about what you see and feel.



Try words such as crunchy, smooth, rough, red, yellow, big, little, wet and dry. Older toddlers can sort leaves by color or size, count pinecones, or look for matching objects.

There's no right way to do this activity. The goal is simply to explore, talk and learn together.



## Pumpkin-Banana Oat Bites

These soft, naturally sweet bites bring a little taste of fall to snack time—and they're easy for little helpers to make with you.

### Ingredients:

- 1 ripe banana
- ½ cup plain pumpkin puree
- 1-½ cup rolled oats
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 egg

### To Make:

- Heat oven to 350°F.
- Mash the banana, then stir in the pumpkin and egg. Add oats and cinnamon and mix well.
- Drop small spoonfuls onto a lined baking sheet and gently flatten.
- Bake for about 12–15 minutes, until set.
- Let cool completely before serving.



**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: Talk, Read, Sing — Building Language All Day Long

Your baby's brain is learning from you long before they say their first word. Every conversation, song and story helps build the foundation for language and learning.

The good news? You don't need special toys or lessons. Talk about what you're doing as you change a diaper, prepare dinner or take a walk. Read together every day, even if your baby wants to chew the book or your toddler doesn't sit still for the whole story. Sing songs and nursery rhymes—repetition helps children learn sounds, words and rhythms.

When your baby coos or babbles, respond as though you're having a conversation. When your toddler points to something, name it and add a little more: "Yes, that's a dog! It's a big brown dog."

These small back-and-forth moments add up. You're not just talking—you're helping your child's brain grow.



**StartSmart Tip:** Put books where little hands can reach them and let your child choose what to "read."

## Last, but not least...

### Cold & Flu Season is Coming

Cooler weather also means the start of cold and flu season. A few everyday habits can help keep your family healthier.

Wash hands frequently, especially after coming home, changing diapers and before preparing food. Clean toys and frequently touched surfaces regularly, and teach toddlers to cough or sneeze into their elbow as they get old enough to practice.



If your child is sick, follow your healthcare provider's guidance and give them plenty of rest and fluids. It's also a good time to ask your family's healthcare providers about recommended seasonal vaccinations.

And don't forget about yourself. Parents and caregivers need care, rest and preventive healthcare, too.



 Follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/SkylineCAPHealthyFamilies](https://facebook.com/SkylineCAPHealthyFamilies)



#### Important dates this month:

October 12 Columbus Day  
October 31 Halloween