



And the answers are ...

1. ANSWER: A According to a study conducted by Safe Kids Worldwide, parents neglect to sufficiently tighten the harness straps on infant car seats nearly two-thirds of the time. “You shouldn’t be able to pinch any harness webbing at the shoulder when the straps are buckled,” says Lorrie Walker, a certified child-passenger safety technician and instructor in Deerfield Beach, Fla., and training adviser to Safe Kids. A car seat that wiggles too much—more than 1 inch in any direction—is another frequent blunder. To check for movement, test at the base, where the safety belt passes through the car seat. Positioning the harness clip at the baby’s belly or throat, rather than at arm-pit level—where it belongs—is another common error.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Carefully read the car-seat manual *and* your vehicle manual for guidelines on proper installation and use.
- Find out if your car has the LATCH system, which allows you to anchor the seat into your car’s frame rather than using the vehicle’s seat belts. The LATCH system is required on all car seats and vehicles manufactured after September 2002.
- Have your installation efforts inspected—for free! To find an inspection site in your area, visit nhtsa.gov and click on “Locate a Child Safety Seat Inspection Station by State.”

2. ANSWER: B Choking is a danger for all children, especially those younger than 3 years, says Dorothy A. Drago, M.P.H., former analyst with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and author of *From Crib to Kindergarten: The Essential Child Safety Guide* (The Johns Hopkins University Press). Food is the most commonly aspirated item, but rubber balloons cause the most choking deaths in children, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. “Uninflated or broken rubber [latex] balloons conform to the throat and are nearly impossible to remove,” Drago says.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Inflate balloons for all children younger than 8 years of age, and dispose of broken balloons immediately.

- Opt for mylar balloons for children younger than 8; Drago says they’re a safer alternative to rubber.
- Balloons aren’t the only toys that pose a choking hazard. Use a toilet-paper tube to judge: If a toy fits through it, consider the item a choking hazard for any child younger than 3.
- Be careful not to leave coins, small batteries, rings, tacks and other such items lying around.
- Don’t allow your baby to eat nuts; raisins; popcorn; hot dogs (unless cut into small cubes); whole grapes; hard candy; raw, hard vegetables; or raw, hard fruits with pits.

3. ANSWER: C One-year-olds’ natural curiosity and lack of injury awareness make them five times more likely than infants and twice as likely as 2-year-olds to be scalded by a hot liquid, according to a 2005 study conducted by Drago. Pulling a pot from the stovetop or overturning a container of hot water are the two most common ways children are scalded. “Scalds are much more dangerous than ‘contact’ burns because they often affect a larger area and result in deeper tissue injury,” Drago says.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Once your baby can crawl, restrain her in a highchair or activity center in a safe area while you are cooking.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.

Tally your safety score

7 correct answers: In this case, it’s great to be a know-it-all. Excellent job of becoming safety savvy!
5–6: You have a good sense of common baby hazards. Stay up-to-date on product recalls and other safety news at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s website: cpsc.gov.
3–4: Keeping your baby safe is no easy task. To learn more about how to reduce the risk of injury, visit Safe Kids Worldwide at safekids.org.
0–2: Many dangers aren’t so obvious. To learn more, check out *From Crib to Kindergarten: The Essential Child Safety Guide* (The Johns Hopkins University Press), available at bookstores or on amazon.com.

Though a favorite toy among children, latex balloons can be deadly. “Uninflated or broken rubber balloons conform to the throat and are nearly impossible to remove,” says safety expert Dorothy A. Drago.

- Never carry your baby while holding a hot drink or liquid.
- Burns in the bathtub also pose a risk. Lower your water heater to 120° F, advises Darien, Ill., pediatrician Garry Gardner, M.D., a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Injury, Violence and Poison Prevention.

4. ANSWER: B While swimming-pool accidents are the cause of the most drowning deaths among children ages 1 to 4, the majority of infants who drown do so in bathtubs. Buckets and puddles also present a hazard; infants can drown in as little as 2 inches of water, “or just enough to coat the bottom of the bathtub,” Gardner says.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Keep one hand on your baby when bathing him. In most infant-drowning cases, the adult reports leaving the child for a short time to answer the phone or attend to chores.
- Once your baby is walking, keep bathroom doors closed or put a lock on the toilet lid, Drago suggests. Toddlers are top-heavy and may not have the strength to lift themselves out of the toilet if they topple in.
- Dump all water from buckets immediately after use.

5. ANSWER: A Between 1990 and 2001, an estimated 197,200 babies and toddlers ages 15 months or younger were treated in U.S. emergency rooms for injuries from infant walkers; the vast majority were due to falls down stairs. While federal regulations ensure newer walkers can’t fit through standard doorways, the American Academy of Pediatrics says the devices should be banned because they have no clear benefit and contribute to injuries.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Entertain your baby with a stationary activity center instead of a walker. Use caution with “jumpers,” or seats suspended from doorways—their safety depends on how well the suspension cords are attached to the doorway, as well as the amount of clearance from the door frame, Drago says.

6. ANSWER: D Parents of babies who were put to sleep on their back report that their infants have fewer sleep problems, fevers and ear infections, according to a federal study of 3,733 infants published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. Babies who are placed on their stomachs have higher throat and mouth temperatures, which may help certain bacteria thrive, researchers speculate. The study also found that babies who are placed on their backs to sleep are no more likely to choke if they spit up than if they were placed on their stomachs.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Always place your baby on his back to sleep. Since the Back to Sleep campaign began in 1994, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) rates in the U.S. have dropped by more than 50 percent—saving about 3,500 lives a year, according to First Candle/SIDS Alliance, a group dedicated to preventing infant death.
- Never smoke or allow smokers around your baby. Exposure to secondhand smoke is linked to SIDS.

7. ANSWER: A Falls from furniture account for 38 percent of infant falls, according to a Canadian study of nearly 1,000 infants treated for injuries in emergency rooms. Being dropped was the next most-common reason for falls.

Advice to keep your baby safe:

- Don’t place your baby’s car seat or bouncer on the kitchen table or a countertop, Gardner says. “Babies may appear immobile, but they can easily wiggle just enough to knock their seat off a table,” he says.
- When holding your baby, don’t attempt to carry other objects; if you need your hands free, put him in a sling or carrier.
- Always use the safety harnesses on baby equipment, and never take your hands off your baby when changing him. 📌

Fit Pregnancy contributor **Kim Acosta** takes all of these questions and answers into account when caring for her 7-month-old son, Gabriel, and 2-year-old daughter, Hope.