



# • babyproofing your home for a visually impaired baby or toddler

All parents have concerns about their baby's safety at home, especially when they start to move around. When your child is blind or has limited vision this can be an additional worry. There are many things you can do to adapt your home for your child. This ebook deals with the safety aspect. For ideas on how to adapt your home to promote independence please see the ebook titled 'Organising and Adapting Your Home For Your Visually Impaired Child.'

# • young babies

The first thing to do is take a look at your baby's immediate surroundings – cot, change mat or table, playpen and check the following:

- Babies will mouth or chew anything they can get their hands on so make sure that anything within reach is too big to be swallowed.
- Avoid having pillows, large stuffed soft toys or loose material that could cover your baby's face, lying around in the cot.
- Ensure that any cords from window blinds are tucked away and completely out of reach. These can cause serious injuries if babies become entangled in them.
- Ensure electrical cords are tidy and secured out of the way, they can become a trip hazard.

If your baby has little or no vision and cannot observe you as you go about daily activities, it is useful to keep them close to you. You could use a sling or a baby seat to sit them near to you whilst you wash the dishes or put the washing on. Having your baby close to you in this way will ensure they can hear what you are doing – hearing the water running or the washing machine turning will give them a sense of the immediate surroundings and comfort that you are near by.



# ● on the move

This is where the fun begins!! Once your baby starts to move around, it is important to pay special attention to creating a safe environment for them. Your child will need you to help them learn about the world around them but in a way that protects them from harm. Of course, this applies to all babies and children but more so for a child who is unable to see potential obstacles and hazards. The most effective way to see and eliminate problems before they arise is to get down on all fours and explore your house from your child's perspective. It is easy to miss hazards that may cause harm to a child when you are looking from an adult sized viewpoint. Things to consider include:

- Place a safety gate at both the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Either remove rugs completely or ensure the edges are firmly taped down. Rugs are a trip hazard and can also slip from underneath your child.
- Check out your furniture. Most household furniture has hard edges and corners that are at toddler level. Think about things at waist level, radiator shelves, door handles, fireplaces etc. To prevent an injury if your child bumps into a piece, cover the corners with protectors or make your own 'bumpers' from foam or something similar.
- Keep room doors and cupboard doors closed so your child does not bump into them when moving around.
- Make sure everyone in the family is aware of the need to put things away and keep the house free of unnecessary clutter. Leaving toys, bags, shoes lying around when your child is not expecting them to be there will cause a trip or fall. Always makes sure stairways are kept clear.



- Keep fragile items like lamps in a corner blocked by a sofa or a chair.
- Fit child locks onto all cupboards, especially those containing cleaning products or medication. If possible, change these to a wall cupboard as well as fit a child lock.
- Always cover electrical sockets with protective covers to protect curious little fingers from harm.
- Never leave your child in a place that cannot be completely made safe – a bathroom when the bath is full or a kitchen when the cooker is on.
- If you have a pet, keep the pet food or litter tray off the floor if possible or place in a room that is inaccessible for your child. Think about the pet and is it safe to leave the child and pet together?
- Using contrast in your home is also really beneficial. Make sure that walls and floors contrast, furniture should also contrast and avoid busy patterns if you can. Using light flooring in one room and dark in another, or carpet in one room and floor tiles in the next will help with demarcation/distinguishing between rooms.

Throughout your child's life and especially when they are young and still learning, it is important to remember that your child may not easily be able to see any changes you make around your house. Moving or adding furniture, putting up Christmas decorations, could all cause confusion. Keep changes to a minimum and if you have to make changes, ensure your child knows about them and help them to explore.

Above all try not to worry too much. Remember all toddlers, whether sighted or visually impaired, will fall and bump themselves often. Be proactive, put safety precautions in place and then let them get on with exploring.



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