

Preventing Falls

*Advice for households with
Children Under 5*

Falls are the most common type of home accident.

Young children, until they develop both strength, balance and understanding, are at particular risk and need those around them to help keep them safe.

Preventing falls – Babies

Babies have a soft spot in their skull – the fontanelle – which means they are at greater risk of a serious head injury if they fall. It generally takes a couple of months for this soft spot to fully close and protect the baby's brain.

To reduce the risk of a fall...

- Change nappies using a changing mat on the floor.
- Put bouncing chairs and car seats on floor.



- Make sure highchairs have 5 point safety straps and they are used.
- **Use safety straps on pram/buggy.**
- Remove toys and cot bumpers from cot so there is nothing to stand/climb on and lower the base as they grow so they cannot fall out.
- **Baby walkers are not recommended as they can tip over.**
- Fit safety gates to the top and bottom of stairs.



Preventing falls – Toddlers

Toddlers are curious and it is their instinct to explore but they have no real understanding of danger. Their muscles may have not fully developed, so if they wobble they are not likely to be able to steady themselves.

To reduce the risk of a fall...

- Move furniture from windows so they cannot access the window. If there are no locks or window restrictors these are recommended to prevent falls from the window.

- Teach toddlers not to climb on furniture.
- **Secure tall furniture to the wall.**
- Keep floors clear of tripping hazards.
- **Prevent access to balconies.**
- Mop up spills on the floor immediately.
- **Teach how to hold handrail on the stairs and fit stair gates.**

Stairgates

- Screw-fit type recommended for top of stairs.
 - **Once screwed to the wall this type of gate is more secure.**
 - The whole gate swings open so there is no tripping hazard like those present on a pressure fit type.



- Remove Stair Gates once the child has reached 24 months old – in case they climb over and fall.
- Do not fit a Stairgates above another Stairgate – the gap between can cause entrapment and crush injuries if a child gets stuck.
- Also check that the gap between the balustrades/spindles along the staircase are no more than 10cm.

Preventing falls – Young Children

- Ensure outdoor play equipment is secure so cannot tip over and is located on a soft surface like grass.
- Follow manufacturer guidelines for the minimum and maximum age and weight for safe use Trampolines and play equipment.
- Only allow one child on a trampoline at a time.
- Ensure trampolines have safety nets.



- When riding bicycles, tricycles and scooters etc. make sure a safety helmet is worn.
- **Bunk beds should not be used until children are 6 years old.**



Can the Council can help?

We provide home safety checks for households with a child under 5 where we can give tailored information and advice about home safety.

If eligible, useful home safety items/gadgets can be provide free of charge.

**To self refer or to refer on someone's
behalf please contact us on:**

028 9034 0160

envhealth@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk