

# Pre-schoolers: independent adventurers 3½ – 5 years

safe kids now

## Skills your child is learning

Your child is now becoming increasingly independent and adventurous. At this age your child has little understanding of danger. Favourite pastimes include climbing. The best injury prevention measure is adult supervision.

## Common Safety Concerns

- Falling from a bicycle, scooter, playground equipment and in the home.
- Children under five are particularly at risk of dog bites and often require hospital treatment.
- The backyard pool is the greatest killer of children under five.
- Scald injuries incur the longest hospital stays often with lifelong scarring.
- Accidents often occur with children running across the road or playing near the road.

## At home

- Begin teaching your child about safety around the home.
- Don't leave handbags and grocery shopping containing personal hygiene products, detergents and household cleaners lying around. These potential poisons are easily accessed by an inquisitive child.
- Keep medicines up high, out of reach and locked away. Medicines look like lollies to young children. They are colourful and appealing.
- Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of reach.
- Work out a fire escape plan in case of an emergency and practise it regularly.
- Teach your child how to **GET DOWN LOW** and **GO, GO, GO** if caught in a fire and how to **STOP, DROP and ROLL** if the child's clothes catch on fire.
- Use safety glass in low windows and doors or use shatter resistant film.
- Replace any broken glass panes with safety glass.



## At play

- Choose play equipment suitable for your child's age, size and stage of development.
- Trampolines can be dangerous! Set your trampoline in the ground and put protectors over springs. The rule is: 'One kid at a time!'
- Buy a helmet for your child. Ensure that it is properly fitted and enforce that it is worn every time your child rides a bicycle, skateboard or scooter.
- Place impact absorbing material under play equipment.
- Remove low branches at children's eye level from trees and bushes.
- Dress your child in low fire risk clothes.
- Teach your child how to play safely with your dog. Keep children away from dogs when the dogs are eating.



## On the street

- Always hold your child's hand when near the road and explain what your child should look for.
- Teach your child about **STOP, LOOK, LISTEN and THINK**.
- Never allow your child to ride a bike, scooter or skateboard on the road.



## In the car

- Never leave your child alone in the car. The temperature inside your car can increase by more than 30°C within fifteen minutes. When you leave your car, take your child with you - even for small errands.
- Use the appropriate restraint on every trip - a forward facing restraint is suitable until your child outgrows it or weighs 18kg.
- Double check that the harness fits your child. Lightweight summer clothing may require you to tighten the harness.
- Provide plenty of cool fluids regularly to avoid dehydration.
- Dress children appropriately to promote free air flow around their bodies.



## Helpful tips on buying a bicycle safety helmet for your child

### How do I know what size helmet suits my child?

- Use a tape to measure around your child's head just above the eyes and ears.
- Match this with the helmet sizes listed on the display box to find a helmet that covers this measurement.

### What features should I look for in a child's bicycle helmet?

- Most importantly, look for the Australian Standard's "5 ticks" certification label. This is usually displayed on the packaging and on the helmet. This label ensures that the helmet has passed through a rigorous testing regime and meets the stringent safety standard required by Australian state road laws. Not all helmets meet this standard!
- Added head coverage, especially for young children.
- Very young children, under one year old, may not have enough strength in their neck muscles to support a helmet. Seek advice from a paediatrician.
- Bright colours will improve the chances that your child will be seen by other cyclists, pedestrians and most importantly, by car drivers.
- Adequate venting is also advised to keep your child's head cool.
- Extra pads are helpful, especially as your child is growing, as they may extend the useful life of the helmet.
- **IMPORTANT!** – No helmet can protect the wearer against all possible impacts. For maximum protection the helmet must be a good fit and securely fastened.



## safe kids now General Tips on Safety

1. Teach your child basic water awareness and how to swim.  
Enrol them in professional swimming lessons.
2. Buy a helmet, elbow and knee pads and a wrist guard to protect your child when riding small wheeled toys.
3. Enrol in one of the many Melbourne Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Board 'Fire Ed' programs.
4. Start sound road safety practices and behaviour.
5. Develop a family emergency plan in case of fire.
6. Ask your local Council if your pool fence and self closing gate meet regulations.
7. Establish rules when in or around your pool.
8. Establish a rule that children are kept away from dogs when the dogs are being fed.
9. Only buy toys that are suitable for the age and development of your child.

### For more information

Your local Maternal and Child Health nurse

Maternal and Child Health Line 24 hours **13 22 29**

The Royal Children's Hospital Safety Centre for a variety of safety products **9345 5085**

Poisons Information Centre in case of an emergency **13 11 26**

VicRoads for advice on choosing and using restraints **1300 360 745**

RACV for locations of restraint fitting stations **1300 728 363**

Royal Life Saving Society of Victoria for CPR courses and a pool sign **9568 5822**

St John's Ambulance for a variety of first aid courses **13 13 94**

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**Kidsafe**  
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