

Child Fall Prevention Toolkit

A Resource for Service Providers



Child Safety Link (CSL) is an injury prevention program of IWK Health dedicated to reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional injury to children and youth in Atlantic Canada.

For more information about Child Safety Link:

Website: www.childsafetylink.ca

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/childsafetylink/>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ChildSafetyLinkIWK

YouTube: www.youtube.com/childsafetylink

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/child-safety-link/



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- Cindy Russell, Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention
- Kathy Belton, Injury Prevention Centre (Alberta)
- Beth Blakely, Saskatchewan Prevention Institute

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Child Safety Link recognizes the support of the Province of Nova Scotia. We are pleased to work in partnership with the **Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage** to develop and promote the Child Fall Prevention Toolkit.





The Link

BY CHILD SAFETY LINK
IWK HEALTH

The Link is an online Community of Practice that focuses on child injury prevention, specifically in the Atlantic Canadian provinces.

Unintentional child injury is a multifaceted, complex issue that disproportionately affects families and communities in the Atlantic Canadian provinces.

The Link brings together experts and practitioners to share knowledge and lessons learned, collaborate to develop stronger solutions, while networking across sectors. This is a one-stop-shop for child injury prevention tools and resources, including capacity-building workshops, peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, and virtual events.

Join Child Safety Link in the movement to mitigate unintentional child injury and foster a safer Atlantic Canada for our children and youth.



CHILDSAFETYLINK
Here for you.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Child Fall Prevention Toolkit! This resource was created to help community-based organizations support families and caregivers in making their homes safer for children. Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalizations for children across Canada, including Atlantic Canada. One of our goals at Child Safety Link (CSL) is to prevent serious injuries from falls at home.

CSL appreciates the work of service providers who support families every day with programs and services to keep children healthy and safe. Given the impact of serious and life-threatening falls for children, CSL aims to provide you with the tools needed to help families prevent these injuries.

About The Toolkit

This toolkit is designed for service providers to support fall prevention initiatives with families, focusing on children under 6 and on the safe use of baby gates. To access all of the child fall prevention toolkit resources, including a fall prevention guide for families, please visit our webpage:



www.childsafetylink.ca/fall-toolkit



Terminology

This toolkit uses the terms "family" and "caregiver" to refer to those involved in a child's upbringing and safety. We acknowledge and respect that family structures are diverse.

Whether it's parents, grandparents, guardians, or others who play a supportive role in a child's life, **this toolkit is designed to be inclusive of all types of families.**

Embedding in Programming

As you review this toolkit, you may want to consider ways that the information and resources can be integrated into your existing programming. Service providers have shared that this toolkit was most successful when integrated into existing programming that families are already participating in.

Here are some potential ways to use this toolkit:

- Share the Child Fall Prevention Guide with families (see QR code on page 5).
- Integrate fall prevention information into existing programming, discussions, appointments, visits, and sessions.
- Present the home safety presentation as a webinar, or during an event, class, or session.
- Share some included fall prevention information on your social media.

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To order printed materials from
Child Safety Link at no cost, visit:

[Order Resources Here](#)



Additional tools to support fall prevention:

- Plan a screening of Child Safety Link's "The Great Child Safety Challenge" video and use the facilitator guide to support conversation around home safety.
 - Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A306v-CzpyU>
 - [Facilitation Guide](#)



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Website: www.childsafetylink.ca YouTube: [@childsafetylink](#)

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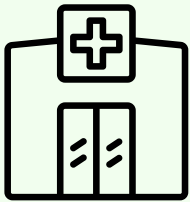
About Childhood Falls

The Impact of Childhood Falls

As children grow and become more independent, it is normal for them to experience falls while exploring their surroundings. Their natural curiosity – crawling, tasting, touching – also increases their risk of falls and injury.

While most falls result in minor injuries like cuts and bruises, some can cause serious harm that may require hospitalization or even be fatal. Children are especially vulnerable to injuries due to their small size and ongoing development. Serious fall-related injuries, particularly to the head and neck, can lead to lifelong adverse health outcomes.

We want to encourage curiosity and safe exploration, while preventing serious falls.



In children 0-14 years, falls are the #1 cause of injury hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and acquired disability.

In 2018, falls among children aged 0–14 in Atlantic Canada resulted in:

- **19,366** visits to the emergency department
- **354** hospitalizations
- **98** disabilities
- **\$52 million** in healthcare costs

For a summary of fall-related injuries in each Atlantic province, visit:

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[Cost of Injury Atlantic Canada](#)

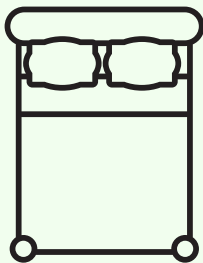
Most Common Locations for Falls at Home*

Home is where young children spend most of their time, making it an important area for injury prevention. According to 2023 data from IWK Health's emergency department, 52% of fall related injuries happen at home.

The three leading causes of fall-related injuries at home are:

Bedroom

- 42% of falls at home happened in the bedroom.
- 86% of injuries were caused by falling on or off the bed.



1

Living Room

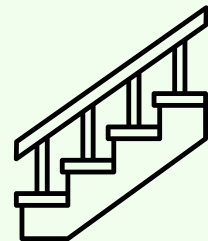
- 19% of falls happened in the living room.
- 64% of injuries involved falling on or off the couch.
- The most common cause of injury was hitting a table.



2

Stairs

- 15% of falls happened on the stairs.
- In children under 5 who were injured on the stairs, 63% of cases did not have a baby gate in place.



3

Stairs

Children can fall on or down stairs if not secured with the proper type of baby gate.



Furniture

Infants can roll off changing tables, and toddlers can fall from beds or highchairs.



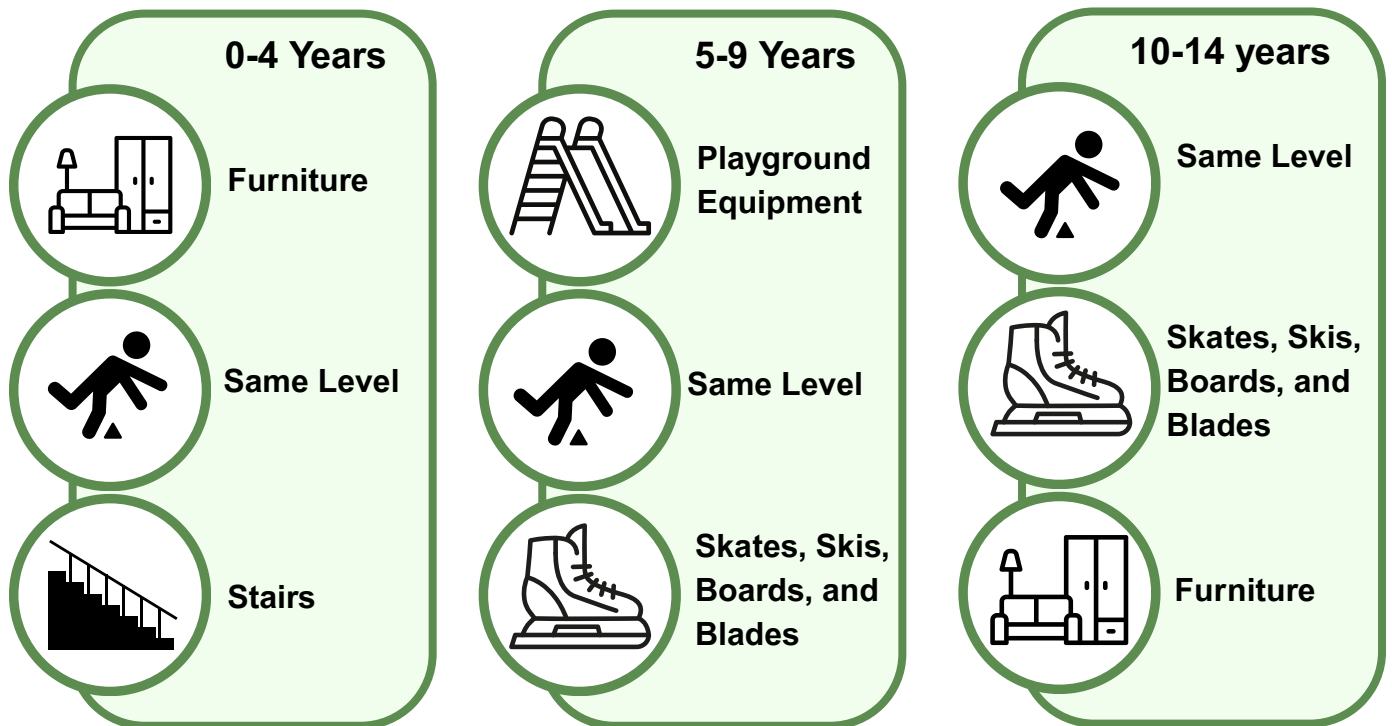
Same Level

These trips and falls can happen anywhere in the home, often when children run or play.



*According to data from the IWK Health Centre - 2023

The Top Causes of Childhood Falls By Age



In the following sections we'll explore ways of creating safer home environments while also allowing for children's natural curiosity. Let's take a look at the difference between a risk, and a hazard.



Risks and Hazards

Curiosity and exploration are an important part of children's growth and development. Our goal should be to create a safe environment for children to learn, play, and grow. To do this we need to understand the difference between risks and hazards:

Hazard

A danger that a child cannot recognize or handle safely.

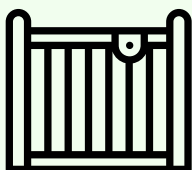
For example, an unprotected staircase is a hazard because it poses a serious risk that young children may not be able to navigate safely.



Risk

A challenge that a child can recognize and decide how to handle based on their skills. For example, the risk posed by unprotected stairs decreases as a child grows older and learns how to go up and down safely.

When creating a safe space, it is important to identify and minimize hazards while still allowing children to experience beneficial risks. Allowing children to navigate risks through play is an important part of their development. It promotes independence, physical and emotional growth, and resilience, all of which benefit them as they grow older.



In the home, hazards can be reduced by implementing safety measures, such as installing baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs, allowing for safer exploration.

Keeping Children Safe From Falls



Stair Safety

- By 6 months, install a hardware-mounted baby gate at the **top of the stairs**. Use a hardware-mounted or pressure-mounted baby gate at the **bottom of the stairs**.
- When a child begins to use stairs on their own, show them to always have a free hand to **hold onto the handrail**.
- Remind children **not to play on the stairs**.
- **Keep floors and stairways clear** of clutter and tripping hazards.
- **Check stairs** and handrails regularly for damage and repair as needed.



Window Safety

- **Window screens are not strong enough to prevent a fall.**
- **Install window guards or safety stops** to prevent windows from opening more than 10 cms (4 inches).
- Choose window safety devices that adults and older children can **open in case of emergency**.
- **Keep furniture away from windows**. Move cribs, beds, dressers, chairs, and change tables to avoid falls from climbing.



Balcony Safety

- **Always supervise children** when they are on balconies or decks.
- **Remove furniture**, planters, or bins children could use to climb over the railing.
- **Check railing gaps**—bars should be no more than 10 cm (4 inches) apart to prevent children from slipping through.



Furniture Safety

- **Change diapers on the floor** whenever possible to avoid fall risks.
- If you use a change table, **always keep one hand on your baby**, even if safety straps are in place.
- **Never leave a baby or child unattended** on a raised surface like a couch chair, bed, or table.
- **Never place car seats or carriers on furniture**. Always set them on the floor.
- **Buckle children** into strollers and highchairs every time.
- **Never use baby walkers with wheels**— use stationary activity centres instead.
- Add **protective pads on furniture** with sharp edges or temporarily remove from the space.
- **Don't put tempting items (like toys or remotes) on top of furniture**, as children may try to climb to reach them.
- **Anchor all furniture to the walls** including dressers, bookshelves, and cabinets.
- Move your child to a **toddler bed or mattress** on the floor as soon as they begin to climb out of their crib.

Barriers to Creating a Safe Home Environment

Every parent wants to create a safe space for their children, but barriers can impact a caregiver's ability to do so. These barriers are often linked to the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH)—the social and economic conditions that shape our living environments. Income, housing stability, and access to resources all play a role in whether families can safely use protective equipment, such as baby gates.

Barriers to Creating a Safe Home Environment



Cost: Safety equipment can be a financial burden, especially for families with limited income.



Rental Concerns: Families in rental properties may have concerns about potential property damage when installing gates, or face challenges due to pre-existing damage in the space.



Access to Information: Not all families are provided with clear and accessible information on the importance, selection, and installation of baby gates.



Installation Confidence: Some caregivers may feel uncertain about safely installing equipment without support.

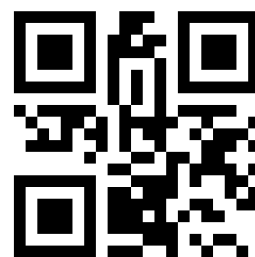
By making safety equipment more accessible, providing clear information, and supporting families, we can help ensure every home is safe and secure. As a service provider, you may know of resources in the community you serve that can be shared with families to overcome some of these barriers.

Do you need support in promoting fall prevention? Contact Child Safety Link at childsafetylink@iwk.nshealth.ca



For a deeper understanding of how social and economic factors affect injury risk, please refer to [ACIP's Social Determinants of Injury Report](#):

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Baby Gates

As a service provider, you play an important role in supporting families as they create safe home environments. By providing practical guidance on home safety, you can empower caregivers to take proactive steps in preventing injuries before they happen. In this section, we will cover how you can support families in choosing, installing, and using baby gates effectively.

Baby Gates: Key Talking Points

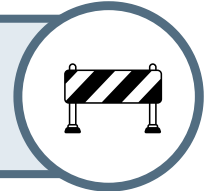
Essential Safety Tool

Baby gates, when properly installed, reduce the risk of falls and keep children safe from stairs or other hazardous areas.



Secure Boundaries

Baby gates establish secure boundaries within the home, allowing children to explore and play safely.



Flexibility

Beyond stairs, baby gates can block access to high-risk areas like kitchens, bathrooms, wood stoves, fireplaces, and exercise equipment.



Timing

Baby gates are designed to be used from ages 6 months to 24 months and should be removed when a child's chin is at the top of the gate to prevent falls from climbing the gate. Note: this is only a guideline and **supervising around stairs is always important.**



Remind families to read the manufacturers' instructions and safety warnings to avoid potential injury. Baby gates do not replace the need for adult supervision.

Product Safety



Check Health Canada's Safety and Recall Alerts

There are national regulations for some child products, such as baby gates. Health Canada provides information and services on incident reporting, recalls and alerts, product safety education, and consumer product requirements. On the website you can:

- Check for product recalls due to safety concerns
- Report an incident where a consumer product caused an injury

Health Canada Safety and Recall Alerts:

<https://recalls-rappels.canada.ca/en>



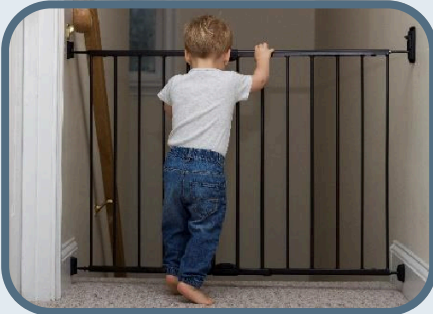
Encourage Families To Register Their Baby Gate

Encourage families you work with to register their baby gate. They can do this by filling out and sending in the registration card that comes with their baby gate. They may also be able to register online by following the registration instructions that come with the baby gate.

Registering their baby gate allows them to get important safety information from the baby gate manufacturer, like recalls and safety alerts.

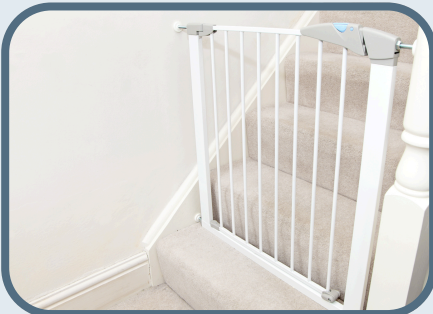
Types of Baby Gates

Baby gates are an important tool for keeping children safe from falls, but not all baby gates are equal for each situation or place. There are different types of baby gates, and it's important to choose the right gate for the right place. Let's take a look at the different types of baby gates:



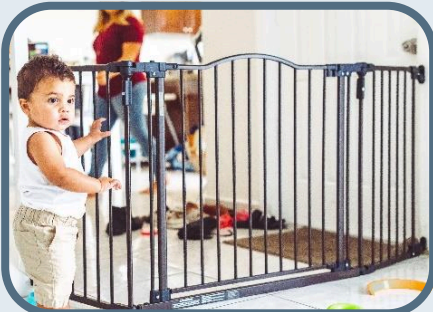
Hardware-Mounted (Screw-In) Gate

A gate that is kept in place with hardware, typically screws, which are mounted into a wall or door frame. These gates can be used anywhere in the home and are the **only gates suitable for the top of a staircase** due to their sturdy nature.



Pressure-Mounted Gate

A gate that stays in place with springs or rubber bumpers that press into the walls and lock in place. These gates are **best used in same-level areas or at the bottom of a staircase**, as they are **not secure enough to prevent a child from falling down the stairs**.



Gates for Irregular Areas

There are also special baby gates for areas of the home where a standard baby gate won't work. Examples include: uneven staircases, outdoor staircases, staircases with two railings/no wall, woodstoves and fireplaces, wide landings and doorways.

Baby Gate Installation

Items you might need:

Hardware-Mounted Baby Gates

- ☐ Tape Measure
- ☐ Power Drill
- ☐ Level
- ☐ Stud Finder
- ☐ Screwdriver
- ☐ Pencil

Pressure-Mounted Baby Gates

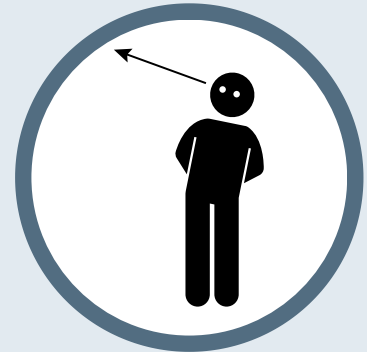
- ☐ Tape Measure
- ☐ Pencil
- ☐ Level

1

Step 1: Look around your home

Walk around your home to find spots where a baby gate is needed to keep a child safe. Common places are:

- Top of stairs
- Bottom of stairs
- Hallways and doorways



2

Step 2: Pick the right gate

Choose a gate that fits the spot you need it and works for your family's needs:

- **Hardware-mounted gate:** Use this for the top of the stairs. It is safest because it is screwed into the wall.
- **Pressure-mounted gate:** Use for flat areas or the bottom of stairs. Do not use for the top of stairs – it can move if pushed.
- **A specialized gate** for areas like a fireplace or woodstove.

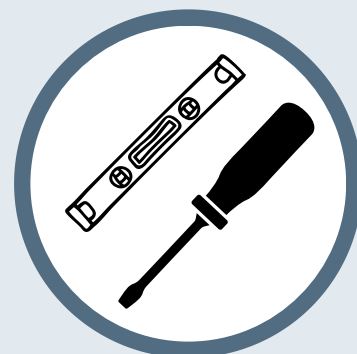


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Step 3: Install the gate

Follow this process to put up a gate. For more detailed instructions refer to the manufacturer's instruction manual.

- 1. Measure the area:** Make sure the gate fits the width of the space.
- 2. Read instructions:** Every gate comes with instructions. Follow the instructions carefully.
- 3. Attach hardware or secure gate:**
 - For hardware-mounted gates, you will need a screwdriver and drill to screw the hardware into the wall.
 - For pressure-mounted gates, push the gate into place and tighten until it's firmly in place.
- 4. Test the gate:** Make sure the gate opens and closes easily and is secure enough that a child cannot move it. If installing at stairs, ensure it opens over the landing, and not over the stairs.



4

Step 4: Show others how to use the gate

Once the gate is up, show your family and visitors (like grandparents, babysitters, and friends) how to use it. Make sure they know:

- How to lock and unlock the gate
- To always close the gate after using it

Be mindful when teaching others to open the gate, so that the child does not learn to open the gate as well.



Always follow the complete instructions that come with your baby gate. This sheet is not meant to replace the product instructions.

Using Baby Gates Safely

Safe



Top of Stairs: Use a hardware-mounted gate. Install it so that it opens over the floor, and not the stairs.



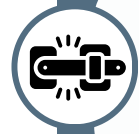
Bottom of Stairs: Use a hardware-mounted gate or a pressure-mounted baby gate. This can prevent children from climbing and falling.



Proper Installation: Carefully follow the instructions for your baby gate. If using a hardware-mounted gate, make sure the screws are long enough to enter the wall stud.

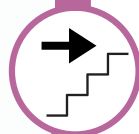


Certified Gates: Choose gates made for children, and not pets.



Keep Gates Closed: Always close and latch gates to prevent trips and falls.

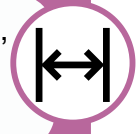
Unsafe



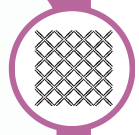
Top of Stairs: Do not use pressure-mounted baby gates. **Only** hardware-mounted gates are safe at the top of stairs.



Avoid Round or Uneven Posts: Installing gate hardware to round or uneven posts can make it hard to latch securely.



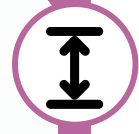
Gaps: Make sure there are **no** gaps, gate holes, or openings where a child could get stuck or go under.



Old or Damaged Gates: Avoid gates that were made before 1990 as they can be unsafe. Check your gate regularly for damage and wear. Replace damaged gates.



Never Climb Over Gates: Children may try to copy you.



Wrong Height: If a baby gate is too short, children may be able to climb over it. Ensure the gate is tall enough to prevent climbing.

Don't Rely Solely on Gates: Always supervise your child around stairs.

Additional Resources



Videos of baby gate installation:



[Hardware-Mounted Baby Gate](#)



[Pressure-Mounted Baby Gate](#)



You can find more information on our website and social media:

Website: www.childsafetylink.ca

Instagram: [@childsafetylink](#)

Facebook: [ChildSafetyLinklwk](#)

YouTube: [@childsafetylink](#)

LinkedIn: [Child Safety Link](#)



Resources used to create this toolkit:

[Child Safety Link](#)

[Cost of Injury in Atlantic Canada](#)

[Parachute](#)

[Health Canada: Safety Gates](#)

[Canadian Public Health Association](#)

[Health Canada Recalls and Safety Alerts](#)

[Alberta Health](#)

[Saskatchewan Prevention Institute](#)