



Restrictive Environments

Prepared by the Health Consultant Team at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

Restrictive equipment such as infant walkers, exersaucers, swings, and bouncy chairs are very popular. Many parents and caregivers use them because they believe they keep baby busy, safe, and happy. While these items can be helpful for limited periods of time, they can also be misused and cause injuries if not used properly. As you read, you will learn about concerns and recommendations related to this equipment.

Social Concerns

- Less time spent interacting with baby. *Babies experience relationships through their senses. Touch is especially important; holding and stroking stimulates the brain to release hormones necessary for growth.*
- Fewer opportunities for babies to play with each other and develop friendships. *Infants as young as four months can initiate and form friendships.*

Physical Concerns

- There is an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) if an infant sleeps in any position or piece of equipment (such as a swing) other than flat on his/her back in a safety approved crib or playpen.
- Bouncy chairs, car seats, swings, etc. are contributing to an increase in misshapen skulls and delayed motor skills such as crawling, rolling and walking.
- Using restrictive equipment that requires infants to have head and neck control(ex.exersaucer) could be harmful to infants if used before they are physically ready.

Safety Concerns

- On average, more than 9,400 children, or one every hour, are treated for highchair related injuries per year.
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that 2,600 children younger than 15 months were treated in hospital emergency departments in the United States in 2005 for injuries associated with the use of infant walkers.
- Moving at more than 3 ft/sec, an infant in a walker can be across the room before an adult has time to react.
- Falls and burns are the most common injuries. Children in walkers can be injured if the walker falls down stairs, tips over, or if the child tries to crawl out of the walker. Children in walkers can burn themselves by pulling cups or pots containing hot liquids on themselves; or by coming into contact with hot ovens, radiators, or heaters.

Item	Appropriate Use	Ages for Use	Limits
Walkers	American Academy of Pediatrics recommends walkers not to be used due to the potential for injury.	• Do not use	Do not use
Swings	Use only firm, molded swings. Make sure frame and swing are stable and hardware is tight. Always use safety straps. Make sure swing has crotch guard/strap. If baby falls asleep, move to safety approved crib or playpen. Infant must be able to sit upright unassisted if swing seat is in an upright position.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow manufacturers weight guidelines • Stop use when infant attempts to climb out. 	No more than 15 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Exersaucers/ Activity Centers	Adjust the height of the seat so that only the baby's toes are touching the floor. The baby's feet should not be firmly planted on the floor. If the seat is designed to turn, it should be locked so it can't turn. Keep stabilizers/legs of the exersaucer down in a locked position at all times to prevent tilting/tipping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant can sit upright unassisted • Infant unable to walk • Follow manufacturers height and weight guidelines 	No more than 15 minutes at a time 2 times/day

Item	Appropriate Use	Ages for Use	Limits
Bouncy Chairs/ Bouncers	Always use safety straps. Use only on floors and away from stairs to prevent falls from raised surfaces. If baby falls asleep, move to safety approved crib or playpen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow manufacturers weight guidelines Stop use when infant attempts to climb out 	No more than 15 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Jumpers (that attach to door frame or ceiling.)	There have been several reports of the spring/clamp breaking on various models of jumpers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not use 	Do not use
Car Seats	Use only for transportation. Always use safety straps.		
High Chairs	Always use safety straps. Make sure highchair has crotch guard and securely locking tray. Do not place baby in high chair until you are ready to feed him. Position highchair away from walls, counters, and tables to prevent child from pushing against them, causing the highchair to tip over. Remove the child when he is finished eating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infant can sit upright unassisted Follow manufacturers weight guidelines 	Use for eating only.
Bumbo Seat	Always use safety straps. Place Bumbo chair away from wall and other objects to prevent child from pushing against them, causing the chair to tip over. Only use on floor or level ground surface. Avoid placing on hard tile surface. Never use on raised surface, or in or near water.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When able to support his/her head 	No more than 15 minutes at a time 2 times /day

Additional Safety Precautions

- Infants are not be allowed to sleep in equipment. If an infant falls asleep while using equipment, promptly remove the infant and place completely flat on the infant's back in a safety approved crib or playpen.
- When using any equipment, children should always be within view of an adult.** Make sure the child can't reach furniture, dangling appliance cords, monitor cords, curtain pulls/blind cords, hot surfaces/appliances, or other potential safety hazards.
- Keep equipment on level ground. Never use any equipment on an elevated surface, incline or near the top of a stairway.
- Check periodically on the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www.cpsc.gov periodically for equipment recalls.
- Safety straps should always be used properly along with close supervision to prevent strangulation.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a ban on the manufacture and sale of mobile infant walkers in the U.S.”

- AAP Policy Statement

“Too many babies are kept practically all day in cribs, infant seats, slings, baby carriers, bouncy chairs, walkers, high chairs, and swings.”

- Karen Miller, *Simple Steps*, pg. 86

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