

Choosing Safe Baby Products: Strollers

Strollers come in a variety of sizes and styles. When you're searching for that perfect stroller that's light and portable, keep safety in mind too.

What to look for:

- Check for a stroller that was made for your child's age, height, and weight. Newborns need to be able to lie almost flat in strollers, since they can't hold up their heads.
- Check the stroller for reliable restraining belts. The safest design is a 5-point harness: shoulder straps, a strap between the legs, and waist belts that connect together.
- If the stroller has a handrest (grab bar) at the front of the seat, make sure the opening between the grab bar and the seat can be closed when the stroller is used in the reclined position.
- The best brakes lock back wheels by engaging mechanisms in the wheels themselves rather than relying on pressure on the tires. Some strollers have brakes for one wheel, others have brakes for two wheels. Whatever brakes the stroller has, check for ones that are easy to use.
- The stroller should be free from parts that can pinch a child's fingers or pose a choking hazard.
- Check out the stroller for stability. The wheel base should be wide and the seat should be low in the frame. The stroller should resist tipping backward when you press lightly down on the handles.
- If there is a basket for carrying packages, it should be low on the back of the stroller and in front of the rear wheels.
- The leg openings should be small enough to prevent an infant from slipping through.
- You should be able to steer the stroller in a straight line when pushing with one hand.
- The handlebars should be at your waist level or slightly lower.
- Looking for a stroller designed to hold more than one child? Tandem models (where kids sit one behind the other) are generally easier to steer than the kind where kids sit side by side. They're also more stable and fold more compactly. If you choose one where kids will sit side by side, make sure it has only one footrest. If there are two separate foot rests, a child's foot could get stuck between them.

SAFETY NOTES:

- Never leave your child unattended in a stroller.
- Always use the safety harness when your child is in the stroller.
- Don't use a pillow or blanket as a mattress in a stroller. If a newborn has too much room in the stroller, place tightly rolled baby blankets around the baby to help keep him or her still.

- Always put on the brakes when the stroller is not moving.
- Never hang purses or diaper bags on the handles of a stroller. A baby could get tangled in the straps and be strangled, or the weight of the bags could tip the stroller over.
- To avoid trapping your baby's head, close the opening between the grab bar and the seat when using the stroller in the reclined position.
- Fold and unfold the stroller away from children to avoid pinching your child's fingers.
- If you buy a new stroller, register it with the manufacturer so they can contact you if there is a safety problem later.

Medically reviewed by: Kate M. Cronan, MD

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