



Middleboro
PEDIATRICS

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WALKERS

Are you thinking about getting a walker? We are very concerned about their safety.

To borrow Ralph Nader's expression, they're unsafe at any speed.

Most frequently, the walker flips over and the child injures his head. That's because walkers and babies tend to be top-heavy. But the danger doesn't stop there. Children in walkers have tumbled downstairs, and into swimming pools. They can reach electrical outlets, stoves, fireplaces, and wood stoves.

You should also be aware they can turn your child from a slow creeper or crawler into a whirling dervish-one who can now reach a tablecloth or electric cord. Your baby will be able to pull objects onto himself like forks, knives, a hot coffee pot or iron. A very high percentage of infants who use walkers sustain an injury requiring medical attention.

From a developmental viewpoint, your child is much better off in a playpen or on the floor. It's important for him to be on a flat surface and exercise the muscles he is over which he is developing control. This way he'll develop naturally, and not be forced into an artificial situation.

Don't worry if your baby isn't crawling much. This doesn't mean he'll be slow to start walking. Some children skip crawling and step right into walking. Studies have shown children who use

walkers are more likely to walk with their legs turned out in a tiptoe fashion. There is even some suggestion the heel cords tighten. Walkers certainly don't assist walking.

Safe alternatives to walkers include “Jolly Jumpers” and stationary play centers. An infant walker with the wheels disabled is acceptable as well.