



Restrictive Environments

Restrictive equipment such as infant walkers, exersaucers, swings, and bouncy chairs have increased in popularity over the past 20 years. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less time spent interacting with baby. <i>Babies experience relationships through their senses. Touch is especially important; holding and stroking stimulates the brain to release hormones necessary for growth.</i> • Fewer opportunities for babies to play with each other and develop friendships. <i>Infants as young as four months can initiate and form friendships.</i>
physical concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) of the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), an estimated 8800 children younger than 15 months were treated in hospital emergency departments in the United States in 1999 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. • The injuries resulting from walkers were mainly due to falls and burns. Children in walkers can be injured if the walker falls down stairs, if it 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.
Quotes:	<p><i>“The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a ban on the manufacture and sale of mobile infant walkers in the U.S.”</i> - AAP Policy Statement</p> <p><i>“Too many babies are kept practically all day in cribs, infant seats, slings, baby carriers, bouncy chairs, walkers, high chairs, and swings.”</i> - Karen Miller, <i>Simple Steps</i>, pg. 86</p>

Sources:

www.babycenter.com
 www.cpsc.gov
 www.aap.org
 “Simple Steps”, Karen Miller, 1999 Gryphon House
 NAFFC Standards, 2006

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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. Pay particular attention to the baby's ability to control head if swing seat is in an upright position.	6 weeks to 6 months	No more than 20 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Exersaucers/Activity Centers	Baby must be able to sit up on his own and control his head movement. Adjust the height of the seat so that only the baby's <u>toes</u> 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.	5 months to 12 months	No more than 20 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Bouncy Chairs	Always buckle the restraints. 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.	Newborn to 6 months	No more than 20 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Jumpers	Caution: There have been several reports of the spring/clamp breaking on various models of jumpers. Please check www.cpsc.gov for recalled models. If the jumper has not been recalled and you choose to use it, wait until the baby has head and neck control and can support himself on his feet before using a jumper. Make sure all hardware is properly fastened; check hardware often.	6 months to 12 months	No more than 10 minutes at a time 2 times/day
Car Seats	Do not use car seats to confine a baby. Car seats should be used only for their intended purpose - transportation.		
High Chairs	Wait until the baby can sit on his own. Always use safety straps. Make sure highchair has crotch guard. Do not place baby in high chair until you are ready to feed him. Remove the child when he is finished eating.	5 months to 24 months	No more than 20 minutes at a time for meals/snacks

CAUTION: Infants should not be allowed to sleep in equipment. If an infant falls asleep while using equipment, it is recommended to promptly remove the infant and place 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, curtain pulls, hot surfaces such as ovens or radiators, 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 for equipment recalls.