

A parenting club of KK Hospital

Should My Baby Use a Walker?

The answer is **Absolutely NO**. Walker is simply a misnomer for the plastic frame with wheels and a fabric seat. It not only does not help your baby learn to walk; it is dangerous and potentially fatal.

Fact 1: Baby walkers can cause serious injuries to babies

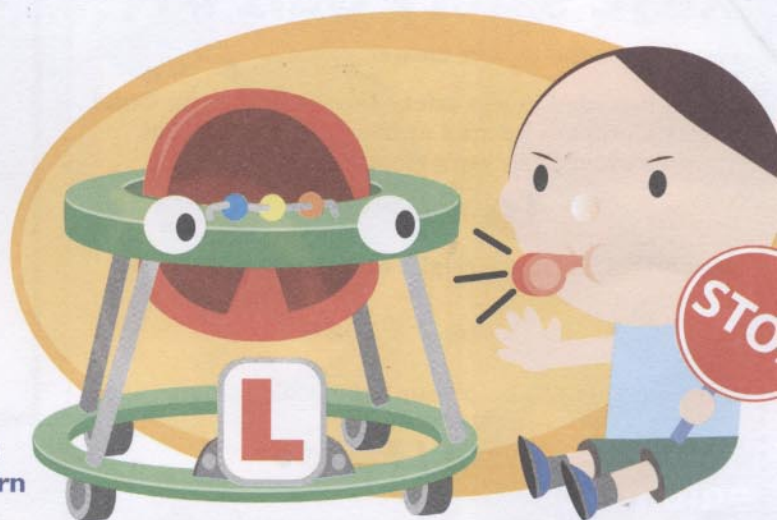
Walkers are unsafe. Babies can reach a speed of one metre per second in a walker. This would be too fast even for an attentive parent to catch should the baby speed towards an open door, down the stairs, or towards a boiling pot. The KKH Children's Emergency sees many cases of walker-related injuries such as head injuries, lacerations, scald burns and fractures.

Fact 2: Baby walkers cause abnormal walking patterns

Baby's legs are not straight when "walking" in the walker. The hips and knees are bent and he will tend to walk on tiptoes. This causes him to use and develop the wrong leg muscles for walking. Such an abnormal walking pattern may be difficult to correct even when he is out of the walker.

Fact 3: Baby walkers cause babies to walk later

Baby walkers will not help your baby walk earlier. Most walkers are designed such that they prevent babies from seeing their feet when they walk. This can slow down their movement development, as they are unable to make the mental connection that it is their legs and feet moving the walker.



The brain has its own fixed schedule for developing the basic movement abilities. Typically, babies start cruising (holding onto furniture to walk sideways) between 8-12 months old and start walking between 10-15 months old.

If your baby is very delayed in achieving these basic motor milestones, see your paediatrician or physiotherapist for advice.

So how can I encourage my baby to walk?

- Discard the walker, if you have already have one
- Use a playpen or play-centre that is stationary. Alternatively, allow a safe, unrestricted floor space for exploration
- Help your baby exercise his muscles under supervision e.g. supported standing or cruising
- Provide sensory stimulation e.g. baby massage
- Provide vestibule (balancing) stimulation e.g. rocking, bouncing or swinging the baby

Adapted from a report by KKH Rehabilitation Department

To find out more about walkers and child safety, visit the Child safety Centre today.

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