

Keeping children safe in prams in hot weather

How safe is it to cover your pram with a blanket?

We know how rapidly cars heat up on a hot day, but does covering your infant's pram with a blanket or cloth create a heat hazard? Is it safe or not?

In a nutshell: A 2014 Swedish study, tested the temperature of a pram covered with a blanket before and after it was left in direct exposure to the midday sun. Alarming, the temperature rose from 22 degrees Celsius to 37 degrees in an hour, creating an extremely hot and unsafe environment for an infant. There is also new research from the University of Sydney on unintentionally heating up prams with covers ([read more](#)).

Why are parents covering the pram, why did this practice start?

Awareness of the need to protect our skin from the direct sun has led to parents 'covering up' to protect our children from being exposed to sunburn and skin damage from UV rays.

Parents also cover prams with blankets or materials to shield their infant in a pram, whether outdoors or even inside where sun exposure is not an issue. Reducing visual stimulation encouraging their infant to sleep and impeding waking or disturbing a sleeping child may also be factors.

The real message: Cancer Council's list of recommendations include: "**Seek shade**, if baby is outdoors, keep baby in the shade...check that the hood can be adjusted, so it can block out the **direct sun**. For the best protection, pram shade covers should completely cover the pram and be made of densely woven fabric that combines a mesh section – so the baby can see, and you can see baby and air can circulate – and a shade fabric section"[1].

Covering a baby in a pram with a "light sheet" whilst "ensuring adequate ventilation" was only recommended in circumstances **when baby was exposed to direct sunlight**[2].

Is there a danger?

The practice of placing blankets or coverings over the pram or stroller can reduce ventilation and airflow and raise the temperature around the infant, increasing the risk of thermal stress (overheating), rebreathing of exhaled carbon dioxide and reduction in their ability to arouse. Infants are safest placed on their back on a flat surface in the pram, dressed appropriately to the room or environmental temperature with their **head and face uncovered and airways clear**. Following this advice to keep your infant's head and face uncovered also allows parents /carers to observe and check their infant regularly.

Use a safe pram that complies with the current mandatory standard based on AS/NZS 2088: 2000. Read and follow the instructions and warnings supplied by the manufacturer.

- If using a cover supplied with your pram, ensure it is an aerated UV cover made of mesh material so air can circulate and regularly check baby.
- Staying in the shade or staying indoors and out of the heat, when possible, is a safer alternative than placing a blanket or material over the pram.
- Always stay with your infant/child while they are in the pram or stroller and actively supervise, observe, hear, and assess your baby.

ELAA Road Safety Education Family Resource – Pram Safety



Starting Out Safely

- Place your infant on their back with five-point harness restraint fastened.
- If using a capsule to transport baby in the car, take baby out of the capsule and lie them their back in the pram on a flat surface, not elevated or tilted.
- Dress your infant/child in appropriate clothing and protect them from the direct sun. Dress them as you would dress yourself to suit the weather.
 - If baby is showing signs of heat stress, including signs such as sweaty, flushed in the face, or hot to touch, remove some bedding or clothing. (If baby is unwell, seek medical attention.)
- Always keep baby's head and face uncovered.
- Babies regulate their temperature through their head and face. Do not use hats for an infant in a pram.
- Speak to your health nurse about best ways to keep your infant hydrated in warmer weather.



Links:

[1,2]

<https://www.sunsmart.com.au/downloads/resources/info-sheets/sun-protection-babies-toddlers-info-sheet.pdf>

www.childroadsafety.org.au

www.carseatssavelives.com.au

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