### Sündhedsstyrelsen



National Board of Health



## SAFETY FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

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#### Safety for babies and toddlers

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# Lots of children admitted to the emergency department every year

Every year in Denmark, about 128,000 children below the age of 13 are taken to a hospital emergency department. Approx. 31,000 are under 3 years of age.

Most accidents happen at home

Most accidents involving babies and toddlers happen at home, in the garden, or in a yard. Statistically speaking, accidents pose the greatest threat to children's health. Babies and toddlers should therefore never be left unattended by adults.

- Every day, about 350 children are admitted to hospital emergency departments in Denmark, of whom approx. 85 are under 3 years of age.
- Boys are involved in accidents more often than girls.
- Most accidents happen towards the end of the day when everybody is tired.
- Up until the age of 5 or 6, most accidents happen in the home.

Children need excitement and challenges. They also need to be able to learn from their own mistakes. As parents, we must prevent our children from having serious accidents. Accidents can be prevented by creating a safe environment for your child. Your child will then be able to develop at his own pace and also satisfy his natural curiosity about the world around him.

#### Children develop fast

Most accidents involving babies and toddlers happen when they are trying to learn something new, and their parents are not prepared for it. When babies start to crawl and walk, they are still not in full control of their bodies. They do not have a fully developed sense of balance, and it is hard for them to judge distances, increasing the risk of accidents. Children who are crawling can suddenly make their way up the stairs, and they will closely inspect everything they find on the floor and on a table by putting it in their mouths. This increases the risk of a child choking on or becoming poisoned by, for example, cigarettes or medicines which are left within his reach.

#### Most common accidents

#### 1. Contact accidents

- where something falls, for example, on the child's head or the child drops something on his toes.

#### 2. Falls

- where a child rolls off a baby changing table, the sofa or leans too far forward in its baby rocker and so falls off the surface. Such accidents are often the result of poorly thought-out changing arrangements or a lack of attention. The most serious falls happen on stairs and from windows and balconies.

#### 3. Crushing accidents, stabs and cuts

- where a child gets his fingers caught in a door/car door, stabs himself on a sharp object or cuts his fingers.

#### 4. Burns

- for example being scalded by coffee, tea or boiling water.

#### 5. Poisoning

- for example with medicine, vitamin pills, cleaning agents etc.

First aid, see page 19.

# Protect your children from accidents already from birth

Parents can do a lot to prevent accidents. You can childproof your home and the immediate surroundings. Moreover, you can reduce the risk of your child having accidents by only buying products which comply with the applicable safety requirements.

#### Buying safe products

Some accidents can be prevented by childproofing your home before your child is born. For instance by organising the changing table appropriately, and by choosing safe equipment when buying prams, cots and child safety seats etc.

Oh no

Suddenly your child is able to stand up and touch objects which used to be out of reach. Take a close look at how safe the products are, and consult the shop assistants before reaching a decision.

Unless you have already equipped your home with smoke alarms, now is a good time to do so.

The Danish Consumer Agency – www.forbrug.dk (Danish only), The Danish Consumer Council – www.taenk.dk (Danish only) and The Danish Safety Technology Authority – www.sikkerhedsstyrelsen.dk (Danish only) provide further information on safe products.

#### Check your home

While children are young, and as they grow and acquire more skills, you should regularly check your home and remove hazardous objects.



#### Get down to child height

It's a good idea to get down to baby level and crawl around your home on your knees – you will then quickly catch sight of any hazardous places and objects at child height.



### Avoid accidents at home

#### Changing table

Children can be extremely lively, from the moment they are born. A sudden movement coinciding with a moment's lapse in attention can result in your child falling to the floor head first.

- The changing table must be stable and solid. It doesn't necessarily have to be situated in the bathroom.
- All you need should be within easy reach. If there isn't a tap nearby, a bowl or vacuum flask with warm water are practical alternatives.
- Never leave your child unattended on the changing table. If you have



to leave the changing table, always take your child with you, or put it down on a rug on the floor. Do not put your child down on your own bed or on a sofa as it can also roll onto the floor from there.

#### Beds and sleeping

Your child's bed must be safely designed with a solid base, and the sides and ends must not have any decorative fittings, screws or anything which your child can prise off and swallow.

- The distance between the bars should be 4.5-6 cm. This will prevent your child from sticking or squeezing his body between the bars and getting his head caught and possibly strangling himself.
- The sides must be at least 60 cm high when the base of the bed is in the lowest position, and 30 cm when the base is at its highest. Remove the sides of the bed once the child can climb over them by himself to prevent falls.
- If the base of the bed is slatted, the distance between the slats must not exceed 6 cm.
- The distance between the base and sides/ends must be max. 2.5 cm.



 Other gaps and, for example, screw holes must either be less than 0.7 cm or between 1.2 and 2.5 cm.

#### Do not use waterbeds for babies

Waterbeds are not suitable for babies, who need a firm base in order to develop their motor skills. Some waterbeds are so soft that a baby might suffocate if he rolls over onto his tummy when lying in his parents' bed. Therefore you should not bring your baby into your bed if you have a waterbed.

#### Prevent cot death

Always put your baby down to sleep on his back. This significantly cuts the risk of cot death. If you bring your baby into your own bed, he must sleep under his own duvet to avoid overheating, and

#### Mattresses

Do not use plastic to protect your mattresses as thin plastic sheets in particular increase the risk of suffocation.

#### Duvets

Your child's duvet must be light and the right size. Ideally it should be shorter than the length of the bed.

#### Pillows

A pillow should not be used as it may cover a child's mouth and nose, preventing it from getting enough air. Also, a pillow can make the bed too hot for the child. Instead, use cotton nappies or towels to protect the sheet from saliva or vomit. A pillow should only be used once the child is 12 months old, and it should be completely flat.

there has to be ample space to avoid the risk of you smothering your baby while sleeping.

By not smoking at home you reduce the risk of cot death.

#### Carrycots

Carrycots must have sides and a hood. The carrycot must be at least 20 cm deep, and the straps must extend all the way under the base. Every year, numerous babies are injured because a parent fails to take hold of both straps, or because one of the straps slips out of their hand, and as a result the carrycot tips over.



Remember to check that you are holding both handles securely before lifting the carrycot.

#### Soothers and soother chains

Buy soothers which comply with the European standard for soothers, EN 1400. Always pull the soother before giving it to your child to check that it is in one piece and safe.

Do not use soother chains as they can easily break, in which case it would be easy for your child to swallow the small parts or get them caught in his throat. Never let your child sleep with a soother chain because of the risk of strangulation. Never attach a soother with tape or string as it can throttle your baby in his sleep.

#### **Baby rockers**

Baby rockers can be used from the age of about 2 months, but only for short periods of time for the sake of the baby's motor development. Make sure the rocker always stands on the floor – if it is placed on the kitchen surface or a table, the baby's rocking movements can cause it to rock over the edge.

#### Baby high chairs

There is always a risk that a high chair can tip over. Choose a chair without wheels, and make sure that it stands firmly, even when you rock it. The chair must be fitted with a front rail and a crotch strap or a harness to prevent the child from sliding down. Adjustable footrests are an added comfort for the child when sitting in the high chair.

#### Baby walkers

You are advised not to use baby walkers as they pose a special risk. Baby walkers also hamper a baby's natural motor development and his ability to, among other things, judge distances. The baby can propel himself down the stairs, and into objects which can fall on his head. In addition, a baby can reach higher up from the baby walker than he would otherwise be able to and touch hazardous objects such as the cable from an iron.

If your baby uses a baby walker, he must never be left unattended in the room.



Never leave a child unattended in a baby high chair.

#### Hot drinks

Many babies and toddlers suffer burns when they are sitting on someone's lap and a hot cup of coffee or tea accidentally tips over them. A child's skin is delicate and can be scalded by liquids which are only 40° C.

Make sure you keep cups of tea and coffee beyond the child's reach. Use mugs instead of cups as they stand more firmly on the table. Do not use vacuum flasks with loose tip-up lids. Make sure you keep press pots, teapots etc. out of the reach of children. Also, do not use tablecloths or place mats which a child can easily tug at.

#### Nuts and pips

Do not give peanuts or foods with pips to a child under 3 years of age. Nuts and pips etc. which get caught deep down in the respiratory passages can release proteins and fatty acids that can damage the lungs. In the worst case, peanuts and grape seeds can get stuck in the child's throat, causing it to choke.





It can be a good idea to organise a cupboard at child height which contains everything your child is allowed to play with: plastic cups, serving spoons, rolling pins etc.

#### Knives, scissors and cleaning agents

Check all your drawers, cupboards etc. which are within reach of your child and remove all hazardous objects. Secure drawers and cupboards with special childproof locks. Place plastic bowls, saucepans and other non-hazardous kitchen equipment on the bottom shelves and other items higher up. Keep knives and scissors out of the child's reach.

Put plastic bags away in wall cupboards, and remove cleaning agents etc. from the cupboard under the kitchen sink. This also applies to dishwasher tabs, which often come in shiny, sweet wrapper-like paper.

### Keep things in their original containers

Never transfer cleaning agents, antifreeze, insecticides etc. into containers such as fizzy drink bottles. This often results in serious poisoning for both children and adults.

### Coffee-makers and household appliances

Keep coffee-makers, electric kettles and their cables out of the reach of children. Other household appliances should also be placed so that children are unable to reach them. Always remember to remove the plug after use.

If the socket is not childproofed, you can use a safety plug.

#### Cookers

Children can be scalded if they accidentally pull a saucepan full of boiling water down from the cooker. Always place saucepans and frying pans with their handles turned away from the front of the cooker, and primarily use the back hobs.



Perhaps buy a cooker guard to protect children against cooker hazards.

Check that the cooker is securely installed so it cannot tip. Also make sure that the oven door is childproof, so your child cannot use it as a step. Consider fitting an oven door guard to protect your child against a hot oven door which can cause serious burns.

#### Household chemicals

Poisoning with household chemicals often happens with children up to the age of 3.

Most accidents with cleaning agents happen when the chemicals are being used or immediately afterwards. Therefore you should immediately replace the cap after use and put the bottle away. Household chemicals must always be stored out of reach of children, preferably in a locked cupboard. In so far as possible, buy products in childproof packaging and *never* transfer the products into another container. Store dishwasher tabs in a wall cupboard. You should also keep the rinse aid out of reach of children.

#### Baths

When bathing your child, the water should be lukewarm. There is a considerable risk of scalding. Always fill the bath with cold water first and then add hot water. Carefully check that the water temperature does not exceed 37° C. Use your elbow or a thermometer – your hand isn't sensitive enough! Many scalds happen when children turn on the hot water tap. This can be prevented by installing thermostatic taps on baths, showers and basins.

Never leave your child unattended in the bath, even if it is sitting in a bath seat or bath chair, as they are not safe. Don't ask older siblings to look after your child while you pop out of the bathroom.

**Never** leave a child alone in the bath. Babies and toddlers can drown in just a few centimetres of water. Place a rubber mat in the bottom of the tub so your child doesn't slip. Remember to have everything you need to hand *before* you start bathing your child.

#### Toys

Toys should match the child's age and be made of suitable materials. Symbols or text on the packaging indicate for which age group the toys are intended. Toys for



Toys must be right for the child's age.

#### Mini batteries

Small mini batteries, which are now used in a wide range of products including toys, should be kept out of reach of children.

Also, you should check that the child is unable to remove the batteries from the products in which they are installed. children under 3 years of age must not have any small parts which the child can put in his mouth. You should also check that there are no loose parts on the toy; check eyes and noses on soft toys.

Toys belonging to older siblings often have small parts, so these should be kept safely out of the child's reach. Do not give your child balloons to play with because of the risk of suffocation.

A toy tester, which can be ordered free of charge from the Danish Safety Technology Authority, shows whether a toy or toy part is small enough to constitute a hazard for babies and toddlers. Balls and other round and half-round things must be even bigger than the diameter of the toy tester.

#### Vitamins and medicines

Vitamins, iron drops etc. must be stored out of reach as they are a common cause of poisoning among small children. Children's vitamin pills often taste nice, and a child can therefore be tempted to consume unlimited quantities. You should also be careful of iron drops which have a neutral flavour, so a child can drink the solution quickly, which can lead to serious poisoning.

All medicines should be stored in a locked cupboard, including contraceptive pills and over-the-counter medicines such as painkillers etc. It is pills such as these which are the most common cause of poisoning among children under 4 years of age. Chewable vitamin pills must not be given to children before they can chew, and from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years of age at the earliest. Children under 3 years of age who are ill should be given medicine in the form of crushed pills, mixtures or suppositories to avoid choking.



Remember that handbags belonging to visitors can contain medicines, and that medicines in some homes are kept in bedside table drawers.

### Oil lamps and inflammable materials

Oil lamps still cause numerous serious incidents of poisoning. Put them away somewhere safe until your child is older. Also, watch out for oil lamps when you are out visiting – this is when accidents often happen.

Never pour the lamp oil into another container, and store firelighters for the wood-burning stove or barbecue out of reach up high – they resemble marshmallows and may consequently tempt your child, but they can result in serious chemical pneumonia.

#### Shelving

Many children enjoy climbing, and look at shelves as an exciting challenge. Shelves should be fixed at the top to prevent them from collapsing on top of your child.

#### Electric cables and switches

The floor is the best playground for babies and toddlers. Therefore you should check how things look at baby level. You should also make sure that there are no electric cables lying on the floor, including extension cables.

If your home does not have childproof sockets, you can use electrical safety plugs which are impossible for children to pull out.



Make sure there are no cables hanging down from shelves and tables which a child can pull on and cause heavy objects to fall on top of him. Irons pose a particular hazard. Always put an iron away immediately after use.

#### Stairs

Stairs are an exciting but dangerous challenge for children who have not yet learned to walk. Install a stair gate at both the top and bottom of the stairs. The gate must be at least 65 cm high. The gap between the bars should measure 4.5-6 cm, and the gate should not have any cross bars as they can be used as a foothold. Do not use accordion stair gates. Buy stair gates which open inwards as this will make it less likely that your child falls down the stairs.

Teach your child to crawl up and down the stairs.

Teach and help your child to crawl/walk up and down the stairs. If, one day, someone forgets to close the stair gate, you might avoid a serious accident if your child has been shown how to crawl on the stairs.

Open or floating stairs are accident black spots for babies and toddlers. They can fall between the open treads, and get their heads caught.

Fit risers or horizontal bars between the treads. It is also a good idea to install an extra banister at child height so children have something to hold onto when using the stairs.



#### Windows

Children's heads are large relative to their body size, and it doesn't take much for a child to lose his balance and fall over. Children should never be left alone in rooms with open windows. Install a childproof lock on the windows so they can only be opened a few centimetres.

Do not place furniture near windows, including in your child's bedroom/ playroom as he can use it to climb on.

#### Windows at floor height

In homes with small children, avoid using glass as a construction material less than 110 cm above floor level.

If there are any windows at floor level in your home, these should be screened off to prevent a child from falling against the window and injuring himself on broken glass while playing or as the result of an accident.

### Avoid accidents outdoors

#### **Balconies**

Never leave a child alone on a balcony. Make sure that the balcony door is childproof so your child cannot open it.

The balcony railings must be min. 120 cm high. Any bars must be vertical with max. 12 cm between them. Many balconies have railing consisting of horizontal planks which can be used by children as a 'climbing frame'. If you have such a balcony, it can be childproofed with chicken wire. The gaps in the mesh must be small enough to prevent a child from getting a foothold. Even though your balcony is childproofed, a child can still climb up on chairs and tables and clamber over the edge, so always keep a close watch.



#### Prams

Prams must be stable and safe. In other words:

- The pram must have effective brakes and solid harness fixing points.
- The distance between the handle and the body of the pram must be min. 23 cm.
- It must take an adult to collapse the pram so the child does not get his fingers caught.
- Rain covers should fit the pram.

The pram should also be safe when being used:

- Make a habit of checking that the body of the pram is securely attached to the underframe before putting your child in the pram.
- Fit reflectors to the body of the pram.
- Place shopping etc. in a basket under the pram. Hanging shopping bags etc. from the handle will make the pram unstable.
- Use an insect net. This will prevent insects, cats etc. from entering the pram.

- Place the pram in the shade in spring and summer. Children can easily overheat as it can quickly get very hot under the hood.
- Only use a rain cover when taking your child for a walk if you can keep a constant eye on it.

If your child is sleeping outdoors in the pram, place it under an overhang etc. Never put your child out to sleep with the rain cover on the pram. Your child can pull at the cover when it wakes, and risks being suffocated by it.

Read the specific safety requirements for prams on the Danish Consumer Agency's website www.forbrug.dk (Danish only)

#### **Baby buggies**

Many different kinds of baby buggies are available, but irrespective of type, you should check the following:

- Any fixing points for harnesses must be solid and secure.
- The baby buggy must be fitted with a device to prevent inadvertent folding.
- The brakes must be effective and reliable, and the baby buggy must be stable.

#### Furthermore:

- Avoid suspending heavy shopping bags from the handle – it is far better to place them in the basket beneath the seat instead.
- Do not let your child sleep in the baby buggy unattended as a baby buggy is not a safe place to sleep.
- Only use umbrella folding buggies for short trips as they do not provide adequate support to the child's back.

### Crossing the road with a pram or baby buggy

Prams and baby buggies are both so low that it is hard for road users to see them, especially if there are parked cars along the pavement. You should therefore avoid pushing the pram or baby buggy in front of you unless you have a clear view of the road. Walk instead beside the pram or baby buggy.



#### Pram harness/baby buggy harness

Harnesses should carry the Danish Institute for Informative Labelling's label, and be used from when the child can start to roll around or sit up on his own. Harnesses should always be used for a child who is awake and sitting up in the pram/baby buggy. If the child is sleeping with a harness on, you should keep a regular eye on him as no harness is completely safe. The harness must be attached to fixing points on both sides, and the straps must be completely tight across the base of the pram/baby buggy to prevent the child from getting caught in the strap, developing sores or, in the worst case, being throttled by the harness.

#### Child bike seats

A child must be able to sit up unsupported before you take him with you on your bicycle.

Choose a well-built, safe child bike seat with a one-piece moulded seat, adjustable footrests and straps to secure the feet, neck rest and H or Y straps. The bicycle is required by law to have two brakes.

When choosing a child bike seat, take both your child and your bicycle with you. The seat must be mounted on the bicycle frame, and not just on the bicycle carrier. The child must match the weight which the child bike seat is designed to carry. The bicycle should also be fitted with a dress guard to prevent your child's feet from getting



caught in the spokes. If your bicycle seat has springs, they should be covered to prevent your child from getting his fingers caught.

#### **Bicycle helmets**

Children should use bicycle helmets that conform to the European safety standard EN 1078 – Helmets for pedal cyclists and for users of skateboards and roller skates – when sitting on their parent's bicycle.

Under no circumstances must the bicycle helmet be used while playing in a playground as the child may be strangled if the strap gets stuck or caught.

#### Child safety seats

Never have a child sitting on your lap when driving. In the event of sudden braking, a collision or another accident, you will not be able to hold onto your child.



If your car has a front passenger airbag, always place your child on the back seat as the force from an inflating airbag can break a child's neck.

Babies must be strapped into an approved child safety seat which is secured so it faces the back of the car. Make sure the child safety seat complies with ECE 4403 or ECE 4404. The first two figures below/after the E symbol must be 03 or 04. This is your guarantee that the safety equipment is approved according to the United Nations' latest and strictest ECE regulations. Buy a child safety seat from a shop where you can be sure of receiving professional guidance. When buying a child safety seat, take the car and your child to be sure of getting a seat which fits. Read more at the Danish Road Safety Council's website www.rfsf.dk (Danish only).

If you decide to use the child safety seat as a chair for your child at home, it should only ever sit on the floor.

#### Dogs

Teach children that they must not pat dogs they do not know. Not all dogs like children, and they can easily snap at or bite a child.

#### Water

Children are immensely attracted to water. Watch out for even shallow water – a child can drown in less than 10 cm of water. Stay with your child when he is playing with water, either outside or indoors. Never let a child bathe alone with older siblings. If he gets his face under water and takes a breath to scream, his lungs will fill with water. With his head under water, he becomes disoriented and will not come to the surface.

Make sure that ponds etc. are filled in or fenced off. Gardens with swimming pools should be enclosed, and only accessible through lockable gates. Be sure to erect fencing between your garden and any neighbouring gardens with swimming pools. Inflatable bathing rings and armbands should only be used under careful supervision.



### In the event of an accident

#### Falls

In case of a fall, keep an eye on the child in the event of concussion. Call your doctor if the child has been unconscious since the fall, has vomited, been listless or irritable or behaved out of character. Call 112 if your child has been knocked unconscious by the fall.

If you suspect that an arm has been broken, the break should be supported with a scarf etc. before you leave for the emergency department.

If you suspect a broken leg, the child should be allowed to remain lying with his leg supported by a blanket/duvet, and you should call 112.

#### **Contact accidents**

If something has fallen on your child's head or toes, keep an eye on him to check for concussion or breaks as above.

### Accidents involving crushing, stabs or cuts

Cool the crushed area using ice wrapped in a cloth. Go to your nearest emergency department in the event of serious injury.

Superficial wounds should be bathed at home with soap and water and a plaster applied. Larger wounds should be treated at an emergency department. Stem the bleeding and dress the wound with a clean bandage before you leave. In the event of stabs or cuts: Press your thumb down directly on the site of bleeding until the bleeding stops. If blood spurts from the wound, call 112 and continue to apply pressure to the wound until the ambulance crew take over.

#### Burns and scalds

Rinse immediately with cool water. The water must not be completely cold as it can have too much of a cooling effect, which will be unpleasant for the child. Remove any loose clothing from near the burn site. Keep under running water until the pain subsides, but for 30 minutes at least, ideally longer if necessary. Seek medical assistance if blisters appear after 30 minutes of cooling. In the event of serious burns: Start cooling and call 112. Make sure your child does not freeze because of the cooling; wrap him up as warmly as possible.

#### Poisoning

In the event of poisoning, call the Poison Control Hotline 'Giftlinjen' at Bispebjerg Hospital on tel. +45 82 12 12 12; it is open 24 hours a day. If your child has swallowed a corrosive product, he must not vomit – therefore do not try to make the child vomit before you have spoken to the Poison Control Hotline, an emergency doctor, your own doctor or the emergency department. Always take the packaging for the product which your child has consumed with you to the emergency department.

You can also find information at the poison control website www.giftlinjen.dk (Danish only).

#### **Choking accidents**

Ask the child to cough deeply if he is breathing, is able to cough and can speak.

If your child is less than 1 year old and is not breathing and is unable to cough, place the child as shown below and give him five back blows with the heel of your hand between his shoulder blades. If this fails to remove the obstruction, turn the child on his back and give him five chest thrusts on the bottom third of his breastbone (sternum). Alternate between giving your child five back blows and five chest thrusts until the obstruction has been cleared.

If your child is more than 1 year old and

is unable to breathe or cough, give him five back blows and five chest thrusts while holding him as shown in the drawing: Clench your fist and place it with your thumb pointing inwards between the child's tummy button and the edge of his ribcage. Place your other hand on top and quickly press inwards and upwards. Try to remove the obstruction if you can see it.

Call 112 if you are unable to remove the obstruction or if the child becomes unconscious.



If the child is less than 1 year old



If the child is more than 1 year old

#### Important telephone numbers

| General practitioner:            |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Emergency doctor:                |     |
| Emergency department:            |     |
| Taxi:                            |     |
| Ambulance and breakdown service: |     |
| Emergency services:              | 112 |

#### Further information about child safety

The Danish Red Cross (on first-aid courses) www.redcross.dk

Tel. +45 35 25 92 00

The Danish Institute for Informative Labelling www.varefakta.dk

The Danish Consumer Agency www.forbrug.dk Guidance: Tel. +45 70 13 13 30, Mon-Fri 9-12, Thurs also 15-19

The Danish Consumer Council www.taenk.dk

The Poison Control Hotline www.giftlinjen.dk Information and advice on poisoning Tel. +45 82 12 12 12 (24 hours) The Danish Road Safety Council www.rfsf.dk www.sikkertrafik.dk Tel. +45 39 16 39 39 (lines open 10-14)

The Danish Safety Technology Authority www.sikkerhedsstyrelsen.dk Tel. +45 33 73 20 00, Mon-Thurs 9-16, Fri 9-14 A free copy of the leaflet "Børns sikkerhed" (Safety for children) can be ordered by phone or electronically. The printed version is only available in Danish. Toy tester available free of charge from the Danish Consumer Agency.

The Danish National Board of Health www.sst.dk/english Tel. +45 72 22 74 00

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## www.sst.dk/english