



Preventing Injury to our Children from Falls

Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries for all children ages 0 to 19. Every day, approximately 8,000 children are treated in U.S. emergency rooms for fall-related injuries.

The age of the child, developmental status and the activity will influence the type, circumstance, severity and location of a fall.

- Infants are most likely to fall from the arms of their caregiver or roll off furniture
- Toddlers are at greater risk from falls associated with furniture, stairs and baby walkers
- Toddlers and preschoolers are at risk from window related falls
- School age children sustain more playground related falls
- Older children are at higher risk for recreational/sports related falls
- The majority of falls occur in the home or during recreation

There is no replacement for adult supervision to ensure that our children are safe. Children do not always demonstrate good judgment. They climb up onto items that are not steady; they lean out windows to look; they slip between railings; they rush and run. Mostly, they behave like children and if the environment isn't safe, if there are hazards, injuries may happen.

Make home safety improvements

- Use gates at the top and bottom of stairs
- Ensure that furniture is sturdy and not easily tipped. Use brackets to attach to wall if necessary. Children will climb up to investigate. Open drawers make stairs. Televisions, microwaves and other heavy items may topple.
- Avoid using baby walkers - 25,000 children go to the emergency room each year from injuries received while using baby walkers.
- Inspect window openings. More than 4,000 children are treated in emergency rooms for falls from windows each year. Install window guards on all windows above ground level. Measure window openings for a maximum of 4 inches. Screens will not hold a child inside.
- Inspect stairs. Make sure railings are secure. Ensure that children cannot squeeze between the rails.
- Move furniture that allows children to climb near windows or railings.

Play safely

- Inspect playground equipment and ground coverings
- Openings on equipment should measure less than 3 ½ inches or be wider than 9 inches to prevent entrapment.
- Teach your child how to play safely. Children who know the rules of the playground are less likely to get hurt.
- Enforce that your children wear helmets while participating in sports on wheels. Be a good example – wear your helmet too.
- Make sure that all safety gear is in good repair and fits properly

Ride safely

- Whether children are riding horses, ATVs, motorcycles, bicycles or lawn equipment – ensure the activity is age appropriate and they are well supervised
- Appropriate safety gear is a must – helmets, long sleeves, well-fitting, protective shoes
- Many vehicles are not intended to carry passengers – check the manufacturer’s guide
- Ensure your child knows the safety rules – road safety, trail safety, moving parts on the machinery

Shop Safely

- Injuries from shopping carts are much more common than expected. Each year approximately 23,000 children are treated for injuries sustained in falls from carts.
- Most injuries occur when the child falls from the cart or the cart tips over
- If your child must ride in the cart, make sure the safety belt is fastened
- Do not let your child stand in the cart
- Do not place an infant carrier on top of the shopping cart unless it is specifically designed to lock on
- Do not allow your child to climb in or out of the cart
- Do not allow your child to ride on the side of the cart

Maintaining a safe environment with adult supervision is the best prevention for injuries from falls. Safety counts.

For additional information:

www.sw.org

www.SafeKids.org

www.aap.org

www.cdc.gov