

Child Safety: Prevent & Treat Injuries

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Talking about safety risks can be scary, but rather than getting frozen in “what if” anxiety, it’s best to take a good honest look at what risks our children face. Then we can focus on prevention – what we can do to minimize risk, and treatment – what we can do if something happens.

Preventing the Most Common Childhood Injuries

Approximately 1 in 10 toddlers will visit the Emergency Room for an injury. Unintentional injuries are also the leading cause of death in children age 1 – 4. (Approximately 1 in 10,000 children die from injuries.) The most common causes of childhood injuries are: falls, animal bites / insect stings, cuts, burns, poisoning, and motor vehicle accidents. The most common cause of death is motor vehicle related (including pedestrians), drowning, fire / burns, poisoning. Many of these injuries could have been prevented with safety proofing, awareness of hazards, and close supervision.

Motor vehicles and pedestrian safety:

- Know what type of car seat is recommended for your age of child. www.safercar.gov/parents/
- Install the car seat correctly. Use the car seat every time your child is in the car.
- Keep your child in each level of car seat for as long as possible.
 - Rear-facing at least till age 2. Then, forward-facing toddler seat as long as possible. Only move them to next level when they reach max height / weight for current seat.
 - Booster seat till 4’9”. Sit in back seat till age 13.
- While driving, don’t give your child hard toys, or choke-able foods. No loose things in the car.
- Never leave a young child alone in a car. Not when it’s hot, not when it’s cold, never.
- Don’t let children play near cars. Carry them or make them hold hands around cars.
- Model safe pedestrian habits. Look both ways, wait for walk lights, etc.
- When using bikes, trikes, scooters and skateboards, use a helmet.

Drowning prevention:

- Never leave a child alone around water. A child can drown in even two inches of water (e.g. a mop bucket, a toilet, a cooler full of melted ice, a kiddie pool)
- Pools should be fenced off. If you’re on a vacation near an unfenced pool, supervise closely.
- Near lakes, rivers, and on boats, always use a life jacket.
- Swimming lessons are a fabulous tool and are highly encouraged to increase water safety. But, they’re not a substitute for supervision – swimming lessons do not “drown proof” a child.
- Learn CPR. Take a class. (You can learn basics on YouTube, but MUCH better to take class!)

What to do if drowning occurs;

- If a child is not coughing, breathing, or moving: Have someone call 9-1-1, do CPR cycles of 30 compressions and 2 breaths until child recovers or help arrives. (Note: if you’re alone, do CPR for 2 minutes before calling 9-1-1.)

Burn prevention:

- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Have a fire extinguisher.
- Screen off or gate wood stoves, heaters, and fireplaces.
- Keep matches out of sight and out of reach, and don’t let your child watch you using them.

- Don't hold child while cooking or eating hot foods, or drinking hot drinks. If you're using stove, put pots on back burners, handles pointing in. If opening oven, ensure child is not nearby.
- Never smoke inside.
- Turn water heater to 120 degrees.
- Use electrical outlet covers and keep electric cords out of child's reach.

What to do in case of burns:

- Apply cool water for several minutes. Keep the burn area clean.
- Call your health care provider. Give pain medication or seek further treatment if they advise it.
- Call 9-1-1 if the burn is larger than the child's hand print, or if they have a severe burn to their hands, face, or genitals.

Preventing falls:

- At playgrounds: choose safe, age appropriate playgrounds. Teach safe behavior. Supervise.
- At home: Avoid climbable furniture (e.g. beds, chairs) next to the window. Use window guards or window locks. Check balcony railings to be sure child couldn't fit through them. Don't allow child to climb on high furniture (tables, dressers, bookshelves).
- Don't put their favorite toy out of reach on a high shelf – it's a big motivation to climb.

What to do in case of falls:

- Bumps and bruises: If turning red or swelling, apply ice for up to 20 minutes (as long as child will let you) to relieve pain and reduce swelling.
- Bleeding: Wash cut or abrasion well with soap and water. Apply pressure to stop bleeding. Bandage, keep clean, monitor for signs of infection. If cut won't stop bleeding after ten minutes of pressure, or you can't bring two edges of a cut together, call doctor.
- In case of a severe fall: Stay calm, stabilize neck. Calm and reassure child while you check for injury. Seek medical care if needed. If not breathing, administer CPR.

Preventing poisoning:

- Children will put all sorts of things in their mouths! Things we would never think to ingest.
- Get rid of medicines, cleaners, and chemicals you don't use. Those you use on rare occasions (e.g. drain cleaner) store in an out-of-the-way place (e.g. in the garage on a high shelf). Those you use daily, put up high out of reach. Also teach your child that they are off limits.
- Use Mr. Yuk stickers and teach your child what they mean.
- Teach your child to ask you before eating anything new.

What to do if poisoning is suspected

- Call the poison control hotline first: 1-800-222-1222. They will tell you what to do – whether to call 9-1-1, whether to give water, etc.

Note: There are times when parents need to pay even more attention. Injuries are most likely when:

- the child or the caregiver is tired, hungry, sick or stressed
- family routines have changed (on vacation, after a move, new babysitter / caregiver)
- the child learns new physical skills which enable them to do new (and risky) things

For more information on prevention and treatment, see www.seattlechildrens.org/safety-wellness