

FACT SHEET

KIDSAFE CHILD ACCIDENT PREVENTION FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA FALLS DANGERS

Watch out - Reduce Dangers

Children of all ages fall and hurt themselves from time to time. Running, climbing and falling are all part of growing up. Parents accept that minor accidents may happen, but extra care needs to be taken to prevent serious injury.

Babies are wrigglers right from birth, and may easily roll and fall from beds or change tables. Stairs need to be guarded as soon as baby learns to crawl, and toddlers should be encouraged to walk, not run, in the house.

Falls are the most common cause of children being admitted to hospital. Children under one year of age often suffer falls when left unattended. Falls from supermarket trolleys and high chairs are frequent. It is always a good idea to use a harness. Don't rely on the waist strap supplied in some supermarkets – these are not approved child restraints, and are designed to be used only under supervision and only on trolleys.

Most falls occur on an even surface through slipping or tripping. Never allow children to run around holding sharp or breakable objects such as scissors, knives, or glass items. Make sure that they never run around with pencils, knitting needles or lollipops in their mouths.

Watchful adults can do a great deal to reduce risk of injury from falls. The following list of precautions is not exhaustive by any means, but will assist parents to keep children safe from fall injury.

PREVENTING FALL INJURY

- install barriers where necessary to prevent children from climbing and perhaps falling from stairs, balconies, decks, porches, terraces, landings and verandahs.
- secure screened windows – screens may collapse if leaned on
- use a protective barrier or shatter – resistant film where there is danger of children falling through glass windows or doors, particularly for low – level glass. Better still, install safety glass.
- make sure that shower screens are laminated
- make sure that lighting is adequate at all times – no glare and no dark shadowy areas. This is particularly important on steps and stairs and in hallways Two- Way switches should be provided wherever necessary.
- stairway gates should be used for the protection of toddlers. Teach small children to crawl backwards down steps and stairs when supervised.
- make sure handrails are secure, and at an appropriate height for older children.
- stairs should have non- slip treads (some polished wooden staircases are highly dangerous)
- outside steps should have non –slip treads, and the edges painted in contrasting colour so that they are easier to see, especially in poor light.
- open stair treads can be dangerous – small children can fall through the spaces

- keep all floor space clear of toys and other objects easy to trip over. Trailing electric cords, and even hose pipes, can be a problem.
- protect small children in a playpen to keep them from getting under foot in the kitchen, laundry or other work area. It is easy to trip over a small child, and such mishaps may be very dangerous if hot or heavy objects are being carried.
- make sure that floor surfaces are non – slip as far as possible
 - always use non – slip tiles in wet areas
 - use non – slip floor polish, or no polish
 - have non – slip backing on rugs.
 - secure rugs to the floor if necessary
 - wipe all spills as soon as they occur, especially oil or fat.
 - beware of spray starches: excess spray from ironing will put a glassy surface of tiles or vinyl flooring.
 - remove worn or torn carpet, linoleum, vinyl or broken tiles. These are all easy to trip over.
 - use rubber mats in the bath or shower to prevent slipping.
- discourage small children from climbing around the house.
 - Remove all objects such as stools from areas where they may be a climbing aid.
 - Don't leave attractive objects in sight but out of reach. They will tempt a child to climb.
 - Make sure that balcony railings and fences have vertical and not horizontal bars.
- make sure that upper windows are fitted with childproof locks, and that nursery or playroom windows have bars.
 - Never leave convenient chairs or tables under windows to encourage climbing.
 - Position beds and cots away from windows.
- make sure that babies are never left unattended on raised surfaces, change tables, in baby chairs or bouncinettes.
 - Use a good, well – designed shoulder harness for prams, high chairs, etc.
- when toddlers start climbing out of cots leave the side down and remove toys that may be piled up to assist climbing.
 - This is the time to transfer the child from a cot to a bed.
 - Bunk beds can be dangerous if the top bunk has no guardrail.
- remember that baby walkers make moving around fast and easy for young children. They also tip easily. Make sure that children are constantly supervised.
- bumps and bruises can be frequent when baby learns to walk. Make sure that they are protected from serious injury by removing furniture, such as coffee tables with sharp corners, from the play area.
- try to ensure that kitchen benches, etc. have rounded and not sharp corners

REMEMBER: A watchful adult can do a lot to prevent unnecessary fall injuries. If falls cant always be prevented, the seriousness of the outcome may be greatly reduced.

EMERGENCY ACTION FOR FALLS: DON'T PANIC, ACT QUICKLY

1. If the victim is *unconscious*, gently place the head to one side and make sure that they airway is clear. The relaxed tongue of an unconscious victim may fall back and block the airway if the victim is left lying on his back. Only move the victim on to his side if unconscious.
Do this gently with as little movement as possible because of possible neck or back injuries.
2. Send for an ambulance.
If the victim is not breathing, commence the RESUSCITATION PROCEDURE immediately. See advice at the end of this sheet.
3. If the injury looks at all serious send for a ambulance.

4. If you think that there may be broken bones or internal injuries, don't move the child unless you have to. This is particularly important with suspected neck or spinal injuries.
5. If you have to move the child, do it very gently to avoid further damage.
If you fear a leg may be broken, tie it gently but firmly to the uninjured leg, and put padding between the legs.
If an arm is injured and can be moved, put it in a sling.
At all times, be very gentle and give the child as much comfort as possible.
6. Make sure the victim is kept warm with a light blanket or clothing until help arrives. **DO NOT GIVE FOOD OR DRINK**
7. Where injury is less serious, it may be safely dealt with by an adult, but if there is any doubt, however minor, take the child to hospital for a checkup.

Critical Resuscitation Procedures

It may make the difference between life and death of your child if you are able to carry out Resuscitation procedures quickly and efficiently.

Training is available to the general public, both individuals and groups, from the St John Ambulance Association, and the Red Cross, The Royal Lifesaving Society and the National Heart Foundation.

For further information, telephone C.A.P.F.A. In Queensland on (07) 854 1829, or ask for our WORD sheet on First Aid.

TRAIN NOW AND SAVE A LIFE

Child Safety is no Accident

Take care - If you don't, who will?