

## FACT SHEET

# KIDSAFE CHILD ACCIDENT PREVENTION FOUNDATION OF AUSTRALIA INJURY IN CHILDCARE

Injuries are the leading cause of death and the *leading cause of medical treatment among children* after their first birthday. Each day in Australia it is likely that at least one child will die, around 200 children will need to be admitted to hospital and about 5000 children will need medical care because of unintentional injury. Injuries are highly associated with the age, abilities and activities of the child, but as the dramatic decline in road fatalities demonstrate most injuries are *preventable by relatively simple means*.

### CHILD CARE AS THE LOCATION OF INJURY

Children are much less likely to die from injury in centre based childcare than they are in other places, particularly private homes. It appears that the incidence of injury in childcare may be about the same as private homes. Centre based childcare has a number of advantages in relation to injury reduction:

- it is a controlled environment, built for children
- there are trained staff with the single job of looking after the children there.

The concern for children in centre based child care is that:

- children at this age are most at risk of injury – they are exploring their world, with little understanding of danger and little ability to look after themselves; *the child was a factor in their own injury in 25% of the cases* and
- the interaction between children creates particular injury hazards; *another child was a factor in 13% of cases*.

### AGE AND SEX OF THE CHILDREN INJURED

It is clear that as children develop and do more they sustain more injuries.

*Children under five are more than twice as likely to die as a result of injury as older children.* It is clear that as children age the difference between injuries to boys and girls gets larger. *Boys in childcare appear to have an injury rate 50% higher than girls.*

### NATURE AND CAUSES OF INJURY

One in five children coming to hospital from a childcare centre is sufficiently injured to require admission to hospital.

The major cause of injury is falls. These range from slips and trips on the same level, falls of less than one metre and falls over one metre. The single most common fall associated with injury was *from play equipment* (44% of falls). *Fractures* (19%) and *concussion* (8%) were common types of injury and the *head* was the most common body part injured. *Foreign objects* (5%) *burns* (3%) and crush injuries (2%) cause relatively few injuries, but tend to be serious.

*Poisoning* is under represented in childcare when compared to injuries at home. Human bites are less common in Australia than in American studies, where they feature highly in non-serious injuries among one and two year olds.

## PREVENTION OF INJURIES

Experience with a wide range of successful intervention measures shows that the keys to preventing child injuries are:

**Identifying hazards** - identifying the factors in injuries.

### Identify a strategy

- this might be to:

- remove the hazard, eg. Taking away unsafe play equipment;
- isolate the hazard, eg. Putting medicines in a child resistant cupboard;
- introduce safety equipment, eg. Fitting change tables with safety straps
- change organisational practices; eg. Supervise children on play equipment;
- be prepared, eg. First aid training and an accident drill.
- **making the Changes** – injuries won't change until the environment and practices do.

**Specific measures:** Safety checks should start with *playground equipment*. Stable *furniture*, checks on *nursery furniture*, mechanisms to prevent *finger jam injury*, protocols on medicine use and storage are all likely to reduce injury. Education in non-violent settlement of disputes and first aid training for staff will also help. *National Childcare Accreditation guidelines* include sun safety, dangerous products (Principle #41), safe equipment (#42), emergency and accident procedures (#44 and #45).

Source: Australian data is from the work of Virginia Routley of the Monash University Accident Research Centre.