

# Preventing Childhood Injuries

According to the National Safety Council, the leading cause of death for children between the ages of one and four is unintentional injury, with almost 4,000 fatalities a year. More than 4.5 million American children are injured every year. Leading causes of unintentional childhood injury and death in Florida include falls, drowning, burns and poisoning.

The following pages outline steps parents and caregivers can take to help prevent childhood injuries. Childproofing is an on-going task that increases the amount of time it takes for children to get into dangerous situations, but it is no substitute for adult supervision. Adult supervision is the most effective strategy for preventing childhood injuries.



## *Preventing Childhood Injury from Falls*

**FALLS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN.** The majority of fall-related injuries in children ages birth to 5 occur at home.

**Most infant falls are from furniture, stairs or baby walkers.** Caregivers should cover sharp furniture corners with padding, use safety gates to block access to stairs and avoid using mobile baby walkers. Babies can be injured by rolling off of furniture such as a changing table, an adult bed or a sofa. Use the safety strap that comes with the changing table or place the changing pad on the floor to change the baby. Always put babies to sleep on their backs in a crib that meets current safety standards. For information on crib safety, visit [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org) or call 1-800-FLA-LOVE.

**Most toddler falls are from windows and balconies.** Caregivers should move furniture away from windows to prevent children from climbing to windows. Screens are designed to keep bugs out; they don't keep children in. Caregivers should install window guards and secure balcony doors with child-resistant latches.

**Most falls involving older children are from bikes, skateboards, scooters and playground equipment.**

- ▶ Avoid hard-surfaced play areas. Seek out playgrounds with wood chips, sand or rubber surfaces.
- ▶ Insist that children wear a helmet when riding a bicycle—***it's the law!*** Helmets and protective padding will also decrease the risk of injury from falls off scooters or skates/skateboards.

**Children of all ages are often injured when jumping on furniture or running on slippery surfaces.**

These activities should be replaced with more appropriate choices such as playing outside in an environment designed for safe physical activity.

## Preventing Childhood Drowning

**DROWNING IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF UNINTENTIONAL INJURY-RELATED DEATH FOR CHILDREN AGES ONE TO FOUR.** Most drowning incidents occur in swimming pools; however, young children can drown in less than two inches of water. Pool submersions involving children happen quickly and silently, with most child drowning victims missing from sight for less than 5 minutes.



Fences, barriers and alarms add an extra layer of protection.

- ▶ Install fencing, pool alarms, door locks or other barriers whenever possible.
- ▶ Always secure safety covers and barriers to prevent children from gaining access to pools, spas or hot tubs when not in use.
- ▶ Never disable an alarm or prop open the gate to a pool barrier.
- ▶ Learn to swim and teach children how to swim.
- ▶ Flotation devices and swimming lessons are not a substitute for adult supervision.
- ▶ Remove toys from in and around the pool area, especially riding toys.

**Each year children drown in bathtubs, buckets, coolers, ponds, ditches, fountains, hot tubs, toilets, pet water bowls and wading pools.**

Most childhood drowning deaths occur when the parent or caregiver becomes distracted by the telephone, doorbell or chores around the home. **Children can drown in a matter of seconds. If a child is missing, check the water first.**

- ▶ Children must always be supervised by an adult when playing in or around water.
- ▶ Never allow a young child to be responsible for a younger sibling or playmate.
- ▶ Empty buckets immediately after use and store them upside down and out of a child's reach.
- ▶ Keep toilet seats down and consider using a lock or toilet clip to prevent toddlers from opening the toilet.

## Preventing Childhood Poisoning

A poison is any substance that can cause harm to your body. Children can be poisoned by swallowing or inhaling poisons or absorbing poisons through the skin.

### Common poisons include:

- ▶ Cleaning products
- ▶ Cosmetics and personal hygiene products
- ▶ Art supplies
- ▶ Alcoholic beverages
- ▶ Houseplants
- ▶ Pesticides
- ▶ Lead
- ▶ Prescription and over-the-counter medicines
- ▶ Overdoses of iron-containing supplements, including pediatric multi-vitamin supplements
- ▶ Carbon monoxide from unvented supplemental heaters

**Most unintentional poisonings occur in the home:**

- ▶ Know which household products are poisonous
- ▶ Never leave poisonous products within children's reach
- ▶ Keep foods and household products separated
- ▶ Keep all products in their original containers
- ▶ Do not mix cleaning solutions together
- ▶ Always read medicine labels and follow dosage instructions
- ▶ Always turn on the light when giving or taking medicine so you can clearly see that you have the right medication and dosage
- ▶ Never refer to vitamins or medicine as candy
- ▶ Avoid taking medicines in front of children and never drink medicines from the bottle
- ▶ Store household products and medications in high cabinets and use child resistant cabinet locks
- ▶ Remove poisonous plants from in and around the home
- ▶ Teach friends and relatives to keep their medications and other potentially poisonous items out of children's reach.



**The Poison Control Information Hotline is just a phone call away:  
1-800-222-1222.**

## *Preventing Childhood Burns*

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- ▶ Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- ▶ Avoid using portable heaters in rooms where children play or sleep.
- ▶ Never leave children alone in a room with candles, space heaters or a burning fireplace.
- ▶ Don't allow children to play around outdoor grills or open fires.
- ▶ Install a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.
- ▶ Smoke detectors are the greatest advance in fire safety and burn prevention in the last decade. Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside all sleeping areas. Test smoke detectors every month and replace the batteries every six months.
- ▶ Practice a fire escape plan with your children and make sure children have a safe way to reach the ground from upper floors, such as a non-combustible escape ladder.

**Most burns in children under five are caused by scalding liquids.**

- ▶ Lower the water heater thermostat to 120° Fahrenheit or below.
- ▶ Use a cool-mist humidifier in place of a hot water vaporizer to avoid steam burns and scalds often caused by hot water vaporizers.
- ▶ Keep hot items in the center of the table and avoid using a tablecloth because children can pull on the cloth causing hot foods or drinks to fall onto the child.
- ▶ While cooking, keep children at least three feet away from the stove, use back burners whenever possible and turn pot handles toward the back of the stove.
- ▶ Never leave a child alone in the kitchen when food is cooking.
- ▶ Never carry a child and hot liquids at the same time.

- ▶ Never warm a baby bottle in the microwave. Microwaves heat unevenly and a child may be burned by hot spots.
- ▶ Stir and test the temperature of foods before giving them to children.

*Not all burns are treated the same way; if your child is burned or scalded, call the child's doctor immediately.*