

Home Safety



What are the most common types of accidents?

Falls account for over 40% of all home accidental injuries to children. They are by far the most common single cause of home accidental injury.

Collisions with a person or object are the second most common type of accidental home injury and the only one where the injury rates are approximately the same for children of all ages. Typically these accidents happen when children run in to objects, run in to each other or are struck by a falling object.

The need to remove a foreign body that has been swallowed, inhaled or is stuck elsewhere was the second most common cause of hospital attendance for accidental home injury in 2002 with over 50,000 attendances, almost 40% being aged between 5 and 14 years.

Burns and scalds are another common type of home injury. In 2002 there were almost 37,000 hospital attendance. Burns and scalds particularly affect babies and very young children with scalds from hot drinks being the most common cause.

The fourth most common reason for children being taken to hospital is suspected poisonings. These happen when parents or carers think that children have consumed

medicines, household cleaners, DIY or gardening chemicals. Nine out of ten suspected poisonings involve children under five years old.

The following safety tips can help prevent injuries to children by making the home a safer place for them:

Falls

- Fit safety gates to the top and bottom of stairs
- Check banister or balcony railings to make sure children cannot climb on them or fall through gaps
- Fit safety catches on upstairs windows
- Keep furniture away from windows
- Never leave babies unattended on furniture or changing tables; they can easily roll off
- Wipe up spills as soon as they happen to avoid slips
- Encourage children to put their toys away after use
- Fix loose carpets and mats and do not have trailing flexes

Striking and collisions

- Fit corner guards to sharp edges of furniture

Burns and scalds

- Fit smoke alarms and check regularly that they are working
- Close doors at night to stop fire spreading
- If possible install a fire extinguisher and fire blanket
- Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of small children
- Use fireguards on all heaters and fires and do not use them to dry clothes
- Keep children away from ovens, hobs and hotplates
- Turn pan handles towards the back of the stove and use back rings for cooking when possible
- Never fill a chip pan more than one third full and never leave a hot chip pan unattended
- Use short or curly flexes with kettles and keep them out of the reach of children
- Do not hold a child when you have a hot drink and keep mugs and cups of hot drinks well out of the reach of young children
- Turn irons off immediately after use and never leave the flex dangling
- Fit a thermostatic mixing valve to your hot bath tap

Suffocation, strangling and choking

- Do not use pillows, duvets and bean bags for babies under a year old
- Never use strings, ribbons and ties on very young children's clothes
- Strings on toys over cots or playpens should be shorter than 20 cm
- Don't take your baby to sleep with you in your bed or on the sofa. You may accidentally suffocate him or her while you sleep.
- Never string toys across a cot or pram
- Stay with young children when they are eating or drinking and get them to sit still
- Supervise small children if they are eating small pieces of fruit or vegetables. Do not give peanuts to children under six
- Keep small objects like coins and parts of toys away from young children
- Always keep plastic bags and plastic film away from children

Follow the age recommendations on toys – they are there for a reason



Poisoning

- Keep dangerous substances out of reach of children – these include household chemicals such as cleaners, detergents and bleach, as well as DIY materials such as paints, thinners, strippers, varnishes, glues and other adhesives
- Keep all medicines out of sight and reach of children – preferably in a locked cupboard
- Remember that perfumes, essential oils and alcohol can also be poisonous to children and keep them out of reach
- Keep all dangerous substances in original containers

Cutting and piercing

- Mark large areas of glass with stickers.
- Fit safety glass in low level glass in doors and windows
- Use safety film on glass in furniture, or re-fit with safety glass
- Fit safety catches on drawers containing sharp cutlery and knives
- Keep kitchen gadgets and sewing materials out of reach

Drowning

- Always supervise children in or near water
- Never leave a child under five alone in a bath even for a moment – do not use bath seats as they do not prevent drowning
- Drain or securely cover garden ponds.
- Empty the bath immediately after use

Do not leave anything in the garden that could collect rainwater – turn buckets, wheelbarrows etc over or put them away after use.

