

**Home Safety Issues/Concerns for Parents and Caregivers
Of Children 12-24 Months of Age**

How do children get injured?

Children are constantly growing, changing and developing new skills. Although minor bumps, bruises and scrapes are a normal part of an active childhood serious injuries need not be, as they are predictable and preventable.

Where do injuries occur?

- Almost 40,000 children and youth are seen in Canadian hospital Emergency Departments every year due to home injuries.
- Children under the age of 5 are most likely to be injured at home because that is where they spend most of their time.

When do most injuries happen?

- When parents/caregivers are not paying attention: Small children, especially under 3 years, need to be watched all the time.
 - When children acquire a new skill: Children learn as they grow - rolling over, climbing, and crawling. If parents aren't ready, these explorations can result in injuries.
 - When children are hungry or tired: Before they eat and before bedtime, children may be less likely to pay attention to what they're doing.
 - When children are somewhere new: Injuries are more likely to happen when children are in a place they're not familiar with.

Overall injuries can occur anytime – supervision is key

Just the Facts:

- The most frequent cause of home injury is falls.
- Falls are responsible for more open wounds, fractures, and brain injuries than any other cause of injury.
- 39% of all injury cases treated at CHEO between 1997-2001 were caused by falls.
- Other mechanisms of injury include: poisonings, scalds and burns, drowning, choking and suffocation.
- One and two-year olds accounted for 61 % of the poisonings seen at CHEO between 1997-2001.
- The majority of these poisonings (88 %) took place in the child's or other personal home.

- 40% of the children who presented with burns between 1997-2001 were between the ages of 12 and 24 months.
- 87% of burn patients sustained their injury from contact with a hot object or liquid and 5 % due to fire or flame.
- The majority (87%), of these burns occurred in the child's or other people's home.
- Drownings are the 2nd major cause of death through injury.
- Each year in Canada an average of 126 children and youth under age 20 die and another 314 are hospitalized due to drowning.
- Between 1997-2001, 24% of children presenting to CHEO after choking or swallowing an object were between 12-24 months of age.

What can be done to make a home safer?

In general terms, you can help prevent injuries by:

- Looking at your home from a child's point of view. Get down on the floor and look up: Do you see drawers that small children could open? Things within reach that they could choke on? Things they could pull down on top of them?
- Anticipating children's new skills. Take precautions before a danger presents itself: For instance, put child-resistant locks on cupboards and drawers before children are old enough to open them. Put gates at the top and bottom of the stairs before children are able to crawl.

Some specific things you can do to create a safe place for your child and reduce the risk of injury include:

Falls Prevention

- Never leave your child alone on any high place, such as a bed, sofa, or changing table. If the phone rings while you are changing your baby, either take your baby with you to answer it, or just let it ring.
- Use approved safety gates to block toddlers' access to stairs. Do not use the older style accordion-type of gate that forms a large diamond-shaped pattern.
- Do not use baby walkers, they are dangerous and are now banned in Canada.
- As your child develops new skills like rolling, crawling, and climbing, keep a close watch for dangers.

Poisoning Prevention

- Store dangerous products safely away from children's reach. Make sure household products, chemicals, medication, perfumes, alcohol and other dangerous products are locked up.
- Know the number of your local poison control centre. Call if your child has accidentally swallowed medicine or poison (Ontario Regional Poison Centre: Long distance (800) 267-1373 Local - Ottawa (613) 737-1100)

Burns and Scalds Prevention

- Set your hot water heater temperature to 49 degrees Celsius. Children's skin is easily burned.
- Keep hot liquids, like coffee or tea, out of a child's reach. Be sure a child cannot pull a tablecloth and spill hot liquid.
- Keep matches and lighters away from children.
- Keep pots and pans on the back burners, and turn handles in toward the stove.
- Keep electrical outlets covered if there is not already something plugged into them.
- Have at least one working smoke detector on every level and in all sleeping areas of your home. Test monthly. Be sure to change the battery at least once a year.

Drowning Prevention

- Never leave your child alone near water, whether it's a pool, the beach, or the bathtub. Children can drown in as little as 4 cm (1-1/2 inches) of water.
- Home swimming pools should be surrounded by gates that are self-closing and self-latching with an inside latch. The gate latch should be above the reach of children and locked when not in use. (Refer to local Bylaws for specific regulations 613-580-2424).
- Learn infant and child CPR (St John Ambulance CPR/First Aid Courses: Local - 613-722-2002)

Prevention of Choking and Suffocation

- Keep small objects out of reach. These are choking hazards.
- Don't give children younger than 4 years food that they could choke on, like raw carrots or celery. Even small, smooth pieces of food can be dangerous, like nuts, popcorn and hard candy.
- Not all toys are safe for all children. For young babies, avoid toys that have parts they could swallow or inhale, or that have sharp edges. Read the warning labels: Toys marked "not for children under 3 years of age" are a choking hazard.

For further information on any of these topics please contact your local Public Health Department (Locally in Ottawa at 613-580-6744)

Information Sources:

Safe Kids Canada website www.safekidscanada.com

Canadian Paediatric Society –Little Well Beings Handbook for Health in Family Daycare
And their website at www.cps.ca
Health Canada Booklet – Is your child safe? (2002 edition)

