

Key Messages: Preventing Unintentional Injuries to Children

	Magnitude of the Issue
<i>Audience</i>	<i>Policymakers and other audiences</i>
Messages	Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for children ages 1 to 14 in the United States. (Safe Kids USA)
	Each year, more than 5 million children from infancy to age 14 are seen in emergency departments for unintentional injuries, and 5,000 children die as a result of being injured. (CDC)
	Injury treatment is the leading cause of medical spending for children. The estimated annual cost of unintentional child injuries in the United States is nearly \$300 billion. (CDC)
	General Call to Action/“Umbrella” Message
<i>Audience</i>	<i>Parents/other family caregivers</i>
Message	Protect the ones you love: Child injuries are preventable.
<i>Audience</i>	<i>Other responsible adults/teachers/non-family caregivers</i>
Messages	Take action to protect children: most injuries can be prevented.
	You can play a life-saving role in protecting children from injuries.
	Specific Call to Action
<i>Audience</i>	<i>Parents, other caregivers, other responsible adults</i>
	There are simple ways to prevent many injuries or to make them less severe.
	FALLS
Messages	You can take steps to prevent falls:
	Check out playgrounds. Check to make sure playground equipment your child uses is properly designed and maintained and there’s a safe, soft landing surface below.
	Make home safety improvements. Use home safety devices, such as guards on windows that are above ground level, stair gates and guard rails. These devices can help keep a busy, active child from taking a dangerous tumble. Move furniture away from windows. Remove sharp-edged furniture or cover it with safety pads. Place infant rocker/bouncer seats on the floor, not on tables where they could rock off. Don’t use rolling “baby walkers.” Place non-skid strips or mat in the bathtub. Keep steps and railings in good repair.
	Keep sports safe. Make sure your child wears protective gear when playing active sports, such as wrist guards, knee and elbow pads, and a helmet.
	Supervision is key. Supervise young children at all times around fall hazards, such as stairs and playground equipment, whether you’re at home or out to play. Don’t leave infants or toddlers alone – even briefly – on tables, counters, sofas or other furniture.

	BURNS
Messages	You can take steps to prevent burns from fires:
	Install and check alarms. Install and maintain smoke alarms in your home—on every floor and near all rooms family members sleep in. Test your smoke alarms once a month to make sure they are working properly.
	Have an escape plan. Create and practice a family fire escape plan, and involve kids in the planning. Make sure everyone knows at least two ways out of every room and identify a central meeting place outside.
	Cook with care. Use safe cooking practices, such as never leaving food unattended on the stove. Also, supervise young children whenever they're near cooking surfaces.
	You can take steps to prevent burns from scalding water:
	Check water heater temperature. Set your water heater's thermostat to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
	DROWNINGS
Messages	You can take steps to prevent drownings:
	Fence your pool. Install a four-sided isolation fence, with self-closing and self-latching gates, around backyard swimming pools. This can help keep children away from the area when a parent cannot supervise them. Pool fences should completely separate the house and play area from the pool.
	Make life jackets a "must." Make sure kids wear life jackets in and around natural bodies of water, such as lakes or the ocean, even if they know how to swim.
	Learn CPR. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and get recertified every two years. CPR can help a child stay alive with little or no brain damage.
	Be on the lookout. Supervise young children at all times around bathtubs, swimming pools, and natural bodies of water. Adults watching kids near water should avoid distracting activities like playing cards, reading books, or talking on the phone.
	POISONINGS
Messages	You can take steps to prevent poisonings:
	Lock up possible poisons. Keep medicines and poisonous products, such cleaning solutions, in locked or childproof cabinets.
	Know the poison control number. Put the nationwide poison control center phone number, 1-800-222-1222, on or near every telephone in your home and program it into your cell phone. Call poison control if you think a child has been poisoned and if they are awake and alert. Call 911 if you have a poison emergency and the child has collapsed or is not breathing.
	Read the label. Follow label directions and read all warnings when giving medicines to children.
	Don't keep it if you don't need it. Safely dispose of unused, unneeded, or expired prescription drugs. Be aware that if you dispose of unused medicines, they can be mixed with coffee grounds or kitty litter to make them less appealing to children.
	Have your home heating system checked and serviced every year to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Install CO detectors near sleeping areas.
	TRAFFIC INJURIES

Messages	You can take steps to prevent traffic injuries:
	Buckle them up. One of the best ways to protect a child is using seat belts, child safety seats, and booster seats that are appropriate for the child's age and weight.
	Know the stages: - Typically, babies should be placed in rear facing car seats until they are at least 1 year old and weigh 20 pounds, although longer is recommended, until the child reaches the height and weight limit of the seat. - When babies move into front-facing car seats, they should remain in these seats until they are at least 4 years old or weigh 40 pounds. - Children should be seated in booster seats from about age 4 to age 8, or until they reach 4'9" tall. - All children ages 12 and under should be seated in the back seat of vehicles.
	Helmets can help. Children should always wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or scooter, or when inline skating,
	Teach children basic street smarts: - Never play in the street. - Understand and obey traffic signals. - Cross the street only at corners. Before crossing, stop at the curb and look left, right, and left again for traffic. Make eye contact with drivers of stopped cars. - If it's absolutely necessary to walk in the street, walk single file, close to the curb, against traffic.
	Be sure they're ready to go it alone. Watch children when they cross the street until they are at least nine years old and can show that they can cross safely. Younger children may not be able to judge speed or distance and may be harder for drivers to see.
	Check behind your car before you get in. You may not be able to see a small child in a car mirror.
	SUFFOCATION
Messages	You can take steps to prevent suffocation:
	Keep the crib safe. Keep babies in their own crib, rather than in your bed. Don't put pillows, fluffy blankets or stuffed toys in the crib. Make sure bars on the crib – and play equipment - are closely spaced (no more than 2 3/8 inches apart), so the baby's head cannot fit between them. Never place a baby on a waterbed or cushion to sleep. Place infants on their backs to sleep.
	Be alert to everyday items. Keep plastic bags away from infants and young children. Choose toys that are right for the child's age and size. Don't give babies pieces of hard food (raw vegetables, hot dogs, hard candy, popcorn, etc.) and be cautious when feeding them to young children.
	Teach older children about the dangers of horseplay, such as placing their heads in openings like windows, or putting string or rope around their necks.
	HIT/STRUCK UNINTENTIONALLY
	You can take steps to prevent injuries to children.
Messages	Fasten heavy objects. Attach bookshelves or entertainment centers securely to the wall. Fasten heavy tabletop objects like TVs so that children cannot pull them down.

	Ensure safe play with toys. Show children how toys should be used and watch them closely. Be sure children use sleds, skateboards, bikes and tricycles away from traffic.
	CUTS AND PUNCTURES
	You can take steps to prevent injuries from sharp objects and equipment.
Messages	Lock up the sharp stuff. Keep knives, scissors, and other sharp objects locked away or out of children’s reach. Choose arts and crafts projects that are appropriate for a child’s age, and supervise closely.
	Keep children away from power equipment. When mowing the lawn or using power equipment, keep children at a safe distance. They move quickly and unexpectedly.

Additional Resources

Podcasts, tip sheets, e-cards and more at www.cdc.gov/safechild (Centers for Disease Control)

TIPP (The Injury Prevention Program): Age-Related Safety Sheets, American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://www.aap.org/family/tippmain.htm>

Strategies for each risk area specific to developmental stages - <http://www.safekids.org/assets/docs/ourwork/research/research-report-safe-kids-week-2009.pdf> (Safe Kids USA)

Sources

Centers for Disease Control

Minnesota Department of Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Unit

Minnesota Safety Council