Current Trends in Parenting as a Context for Considering Prevention of Unintentional Childhood Injury

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Good News*

• National decline in fatal injuries across all ages, 0 – 19 (from 2000 to 2015)

• MN decline in fatal injuries for older children (but not 0 – 4)

• MN rates of death by unintentional injury are lower than national rates for both urban and rural populations

• MN among states with highest rates of self-reported seatbelt use (91.0 – 94.3)

*Summarized from multiple data bases
Challenges We Face

Leading causes of deaths by unintentional injury:

- Motor vehicle accidents (ages 5 – 19)
- Suffocation (ages 0 – 4)
- Drowning (1 – 19)
- Poisoning (15 – 19)
Challenges We Face

Leading causes of hospital-admitted injuries:

- Motor vehicle accidents (ages 5 – 19)
- Falls* (0 – 19)
- Struck by/against* (5 – 19)
- Poisoning (1 – 4 and 15 – 19)

* For ages 10 – 19, sports & recreation accounted for a majority of those injuries
Challenges We Face

Among children ages 14 and under killed in motor vehicle accidents, > 31% of children ages 5 – 14 were not restrained (5.6% of children 0 – 4).

When a child passenger was killed, in about 8% of cases, the driver was alcohol-involved, in 2% of cases, driver was drug-involved. In 15% of cases, driver of the other vehicle was alcohol-involved.

In 4.2% of cases, the driver was using a cell phone while driving.
Challenges We Face

Among teens (15 – 19) killed in motor vehicle accidents, > 46% were not restrained.

Among teen motorcycle riders killed, 50% were not wearing helmets.
What is happening with parents today and how does that intersect with unintentional childhood injuries?
Parenting Trend #1

Misdirected fears:

- Exaggerated worries about low-incidence events
- Minimized concern about areas of greatest risk
Exaggerated fears of low-incidence events

Because of fearfulness, we overprotect our children and deprive them of building the skills they need to navigate life as safely as possible.
Minimized concern about areas of greatest risk

While focusing on the danger “out there,” we often are careless about the danger right here.
Minimized concern about areas of greatest risk

And we often underestimate the risks our kids will take when we are not watching.
Parenting Trend #2

Overscheduled parents, overscheduled kids:

• Sleep-deprivation for all ages

• Time-pressured driving
Parenting Trend #3

Obsession with technology:

• Distraction from caregiving
• Example set for children
Another Major Issue for Many Parents

Mental health challenges, especially depression, which leads to:

- Feeling powerless, hopeless
- Lacking motivation for anything, including attending to the needs of your children
Twice as many women (12.3%) as men (6.7%) affected each year.

Most prevalent among women of childbearing age.

Rates twice as high (25%) for low-income women and women of color.

Among teen moms, prevalence as high as 44%.

2nd most likely reason for women being hospitalized (2nd only to childbirth).
A person experiencing depression typically is...

- Socially isolated, less involved in outside activities
- Likely to conceal the disorder from family and friends
- Unlikely to use community resources
- Likely to have marital and other relationships problems

Thus, the symptoms of depression prevent the person from doing things that could alleviate the symptoms, feeding into a self-perpetuating cycle.
A parent who is depressed usually…

- Perceives the child’s behavior more negatively
- Is less sensitive and responsive to child needs
- Uses more punitive and inconsistent discipline
- Is less likely to read or play with the child
- Is less likely to use preventive safety devices (e.g. car seats, safety latches)
- Displays more negative and less positive affect in interactions with the child
Maternal depression: a silent threat to children?

- Often unrecognized in low-income women and women of color

- Often untreated (fewer than 20% of low-income depressed women seek treatment)

- Often poorly treated

- Often invisible as a factor when a child is having developmental difficulty
So, how do we address these parenting trends and issues in ways that will help parents take necessary steps to reduce the risk of childhood injury?
Promote Parental Knowledge

- Basic child development (capabilities, needs)
- Known risks at different stages of development
- Critical facts about specific major risks, for example:
  - Back-to-sleep, no soft accessories
  - Best practices on passenger restraint
  - Drowning is silent
  - Repeat concussions multiply harm
Promote Parental Knowledge

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  *Back-to-sleep, no soft accessories*
  
  *Best practices on passenger restraint*
  
  *Drowning is silent*
  
  *Repeat concussions multiply harm*
Challenge Misguided Beliefs

For example:

- The threat of stranger danger and the wisdom of “helicopter parenting”
- The underestimation of risk of injury
- “My kids never would....”
Help Parents Recognize the Influence They Have and How to Use It Effectively

• Teach children the values and reasons for the behavior you expect

• Set clear expectations and implement reasonable, age-appropriate consequences

• Teach by example (look in the mirror!)

• Continue to parent through adolescence, when many parents abdicate because of feeling uncertain or overwhelmed)
Address Barriers to Motivation & Action

- Improve identification and treatment of parental mental health problems, especially maternal depression
- Address big issues of poverty, inadequate housing
- Provide free or affordable tools for safety, such as car seats, helmets, life jackets, swim lessons, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, with follow-up on effective use
Engage Moms, Dads and Grandparents from All Cultures and Backgrounds

In their own language,

engaging respected leaders from their own culture,

meeting them where they are
So, how can you help families learn the best ways to protect their children from unintentional injury and overcome the barriers that prevent them from applying what they know?
Resources


Safe Kids Worldwide (June, 2014). *Teens in Cars*.

[www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/safekids](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/safekids)

[www.momenough.com](http://www.momenough.com)

[www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)