

Fact Sheets for Families

Falls

Falls can occur anywhere at any time, and children are capable of falling or hurting themselves at any age. No one can escape the force of gravity.

Although many injuries from falls are minor, some will be severe or life-threatening, requiring emergency medical care or even hospitalization. Falls are the second leading cause of head injuries; more than 300 children die from falls in the United States every year.

Indoor furniture, playground equipment, tripping and riding toys are frequently related to injuries from falls. Check in and around your home for safety hazards that pose a risk for falls and other injuries. Call the Healthline for a safety checklist.

Children are very physically active. They love and need to climb. Although it is impossible to prevent all falls, by making sure your home is safe and knowing what to do in an emergency, you can reduce the number and severity of falls and respond to injuries quickly.

Fall prevention tips

- Always supervise young children at play.
- If you have outdoor playground equipment, make sure the surface underneath and around it is shock-absorbent and soft. The surface should be covered with loose fill materials such as hardwood mulch, pea gravel or sand; or you could install synthetic surfaces such as rubber tiles, mats or poured surfaces.
- Sweep sand and remove debris from walkways. Repair any cracks or missing pieces.
- Use child and playground equipment which are safe and well-maintained.

- Never leave babies or toddlers or infants unattended on beds, couches, changing tables or equipment.
- Attach protective padding or other specially designed covers to corners of tables, furniture, and countertops with sharp edges.
- Use durable, balanced furniture that will not tip over easily.
- Do not allow children to climb on furniture, stools or ladders.
- Discourage running indoors.
- Secure or remove loose mats and rugs.
- Use skid-proof mats or stickers in the bath.
- Place safety gates at the top and bottom of all stairs.
- Pick up toys and other objects from the floor and clean up spills right away.
- Install window guards on upstairs windows.
- Get rid of baby walkers.
- Teach your children how to play safely, involve them in making rules for active play, and enforce these rules consistently.

What to do in case of a serious injury

Most falls will result in only minor injuries needing minimal first aid. In the event of a serious injury, remember to keep calm and act quickly. Assess the injury event, and follow these steps:

- Survey the scene. Prevent injuries to the rescuer or messenger.
- Check for injury. Do a secondary survey for specific injuries. Look, listen and feel, but do not move the injured child or person.
- Find out what happened. Who is hurt? How? What caused this?
- Check for life-threatening problems including unconsciousness, difficulty/not breathing, or seizure and call 9-1-1 if needed.
- Comfort and reassure the injured person.



California Childcare Health Program
UCSF School of Nursing
cchp.ucsf.edu
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