

## Tip Sheets

### Injuries and Injury Prevention

Unintentional injuries are the leading threat to children. Each year, around 9 million children are seen in emergency departments for injuries, and more than 9,000 children die from their injuries.

Successful strategies for preventing child care injuries require a better understanding of what injuries happen, to whom, where, how, and when.

#### Common Types of Injuries

Children attending child care are most likely to face the following types of injuries:

- Minor injuries such as cuts, scrapes, and bruises
- Severe injuries such as head injuries, broken bones, and dislocations
- Drowning, choking, and suffocation
- Poisoning and burns

#### Understanding Why Injuries Happen

Injuries typically occur as a result of:

- Unsafe conditions in the environment.
- Participation in activities which are not developmentally appropriate.
- A lack of appropriate adult supervision.

Most injuries can be avoided by understanding how injuries happen, planning ahead, and taking precautions to reduce risks in the child care setting.

#### Factors that influence the risk of injury

- Age and gender of children
- Size of the program and adult-to-child ratios
- Specific program offerings such as swimming, field trips, and playground equipment
- Enforcement of policies and procedures

#### Program factors that contribute to injuries

Falls are the leading cause of serious injuries. The playground is the major site of injury in the child care setting and accounts for 50–60% of all injuries. Sometimes furniture, stairs, or windows are also involved. Other factors in the setting can include:

- Collisions with objects such as moving playground equipment, furniture, part of the building, toys, a fence or gate, etc.
- Child-related injuries (e.g. biting, fighting, pushing, colliding)
- Cuts by a sharp edge
- Burns from a hot surface, tap water, or heater
- Poisoning by toxic materials
- Transportation- and car-related injuries

#### Children may be injured due to:

- Access to toxic materials
- Hazards in the environment
- Imitation of more physically advanced children
- Lack of safety knowledge and supervision
- Lack of fear or ability

#### Injury Prevention

An essential part of a quality child care program and a major responsibility of providers, the goal of injury prevention is to reduce the number and seriousness of injuries. One of the best ways to prevent injury is to supervise children and take regular, proactive steps to prevent an injury from occurring. This includes:

- Actively supervising children.
- Conducting daily safety checks of the environment to identify hazards.

- Modifying the environment to reduce hazards.
- Educating children, parents, and staff.
  - Setting policies on injury prevention that are practiced daily.
- Setting and enforcing rules for safety policies, procedures, and activities, both inside the program and on the playground.

### Child Care Staff Training

Child care providers should be trained to understand that injuries are typically predictable and preventable. Staff need to be trained on these policies upon hire/orientation and at least annually. Staff should be trained, at a minimum, on:

- Abusive head trauma
- Allergy and anaphylaxis prevention & response
- Child development
- Emergency response
- Indoor and outdoor safety
- Injury prevention and safety
- Mandated reporting
- Medication administration
- OSHA guidelines
- Pediatric first aid & CPR
- Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations)
- Risk reduction
- Safety when transporting children (if applicable)
- Sudden unexpected death syndrome

### Injury Rates

Injury rates are low for infants and increase with the age of the child, becoming most frequent among children ages 2 to 5. The difference for boys and girls in preschool is small, but at age 5 the number of injuries among boys increases as they are more often involved in more physical play.

Injuries are more common in the spring and summer, likely due to increased outdoor play/the

use of playground equipment. Injuries are also more common in late morning and late afternoon when children are hungry or tired and/or providers are busier and less available to supervise.

### Child Development and Injuries

Injuries frequently coincide with developmental milestones, such as when a child acquires a new skill. For example, infants can fall from high surfaces, such as a changing table, when they learn to roll over; and toddlers are prone to falls because their climbing ability is not matched by their balancing and reasoning.

It is important to remove all risks—such as not allowing children in the kitchen—in a child care setting. At 9 months old, an infant’s risk for poisoning and choking increases due to their natural tendency to put everything in their mouth, while toddlers’ mobility and curiosity makes them susceptible to burns. Preschoolers are at risk for burn injuries as well, due to interest in modeling behaviors (e.g. watching an adult use the stove).

### Additional Resources

CDC | Child Safety and Injury Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/safechild/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/safechild/index.html)

AAP | Safety and Injury Prevention Curriculum  
[www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-child-care/Pages/Safety-and-Injury-Prevention.aspx](http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/healthy-child-care/Pages/Safety-and-Injury-Prevention.aspx)

For more information, visit [www.inclusivechildcare.org](http://www.inclusivechildcare.org).

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