

Q: Where do most child injuries occur?

A: It depends on the age of the child and where they spend their time. Up until the age of four, most of their time is spent at home or nearby. Children older than four years spend most of the day in school and so more injuries occur there. It is difficult to say that one place is safer than the other. Each environment has its own risks. One practice that we have found to be fairly successful is making school principals aware of their responsibility and providing them with simple school safety management standards and systems. For instance, all injuries and accidents, even minor incidents, should be reported to avoid similar incidents that might have more severe consequences and to take immediate remedial measures. Principals also need to develop a plan each year for improving the safety of their school's environment and the results of this should be reported to the parents. The pupils should also be made aware of the main issues of safety promotion in the school.

Q: Is there a socioeconomic link to accidental child injuries?

A: Children of low-income families have a higher risk of drowning, of serious falls, from roof tops for instance, burns and poisoning by pesticides. This is due to poorer living conditions. However, the picture is a bit more complicated because we see in high-income families that there is a higher risk of sports-related injuries because their children are more likely to play sport.

Q: How do you raise awareness of all these issues?

A: It's important that those involved in child-raising are well informed. Professionals play an important role, particularly those working in child health and maternity centres. Paediatricians, family doctors and nurses have the potential to guide and support parents in child-raising practices that include safety promotion. It is important that all families having their first child, even before the birth, receive counselling on important safety aspects, such as making sure that their nursery

equipment is of adequate quality. They need guidance with respect to the first phases of child development including stages of physical activity and the related risks such as exposure to poisonous products in the home. And this guidance should be provided during the actual stages of the child's development so that it's not a one-off message to parents to "please be careful", the message is that "your child has now reached that age where you can expect that he or she will gradually explore your home. Ensure, for example, that you store products safely." Another important group of actors are the government agencies responsible for developing and designing communities, housing and products. They have the responsibility of legislating to ensure that all products and living environments are provided in a safe manner to the best standards available. There's a huge body of knowledge about the standards we should set for child and nursery equipment, household appliances and safe homes. Of course, having legislation is not sufficient, it must also be enforced properly. ■

Recent news from WHO

- WHO celebrated **World Health Day** on 7 April by focusing attention on the many lives that can be saved during earthquakes, floods, conflicts and other emergencies through better design and construction of health facilities and by preparing and training health staff. WHO recommends that governments, public health authorities and hospital managers train health workers for emergencies; ensure adequate staff and supplies for emergencies; design and build safer hospitals; and retrofit existing health facilities.
- WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan appointed international film star Jet Li as **WHO Goodwill Ambassador** on 3 April. His first official task was to launch World Health Day in Beijing, China, and spread the World Health Day message of making health facilities safe during emergencies.
- WHO reaffirmed its commitment on 2 April, **World Autism Awareness Day**, to provide technical assistance to Member States to deliver integrated health services to people with autism and other mental and developmental disorders of childhood.
- Health ministers from countries with the greatest burdens of **drug-resistant tuberculosis** agreed, on 2 April, to a series of actions to accelerate efforts to halt and reverse the global epidemic of the disease. Dr Chan and the Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, were joined by the Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China, Li Keqiang, and ministers and representatives of 27 countries with a high burden of tuberculosis, at a three-day meeting organized by WHO.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre>

SAGE: request for nominations

The Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) is the principal advisory group to WHO for vaccines and immunization. WHO is soliciting proposals for nominations for current and future vacancies on SAGE.

Nominations for members from all regions have to be submitted by 30 May 2009. Nominations are particularly solicited from the African, South-East Asian and European regions.

Instructions for nominations are available at: http://www.who.int/immunization/sage_nominations/en/index.html