Ouch! Ow! Oo-ah! Ah! Can you think of the last time something painful happened to your body? Maybe your fingers got shut in a door, or you picked up a plate that was too hot. The pain you felt was your body telling you that something was wrong. It sent a message to your brain saying, “Quick, move your hand!” or “Put down that hot plate!”

Sometimes things happen too quickly for our bodies to react, and we get hurt. Our skin might be scraped or cut, a muscle torn or a bone broken. When our bodies are hurt like this, we call it an injury.

An injury can be big or small and can be caused in lots of different ways. For example, you can be injured if you trip and fall, if you spill hot water on yourself, get into trouble while swimming, or are in a car crash.

Road traffic crashes, drowning, burns from fire and hot liquids, falls and poisoning are the MOST COMMON causes of injury to children.

Can you spot the injuries that have just happened or are about to happen in the picture below?
Why do injuries happen?

Injuries are not accidents that just happen. There are reasons why they happen, and every injury has a chain of events that ends in the person getting hurt. What people are doing, how they're doing it, the things they're doing it with and where they're doing it all have a part to play.

The cartoon below is the story of Gloria’s injury. There are lots of reasons why Gloria’s fingers got burned. We’ve given some of them in the green bubbles — can you think of any other reasons?

The kitchen was dark. Gloria saw some matches on the table and decided to light a candle. The match was burning down fast, so she ran. There was a toy left out on the floor, and Gloria tripped. Before she got to the candle, the match burned her fingers.

Gloria didn’t know that matches could be dangerous. The match was short. The matches were left out where Gloria could use them. Gloria was not being careful – she ran with a burning match.

Can you think of a time when you were injured?

How was your body hurt? What were the reasons that it happened? Think about yourself, what you were doing and where you were doing it. You can draw or write about your injury here.

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So how BIG is the injury problem?

Lots of injuries are small, and our bodies heal the hurt easily. For example, if you fall and scrape your knee, a scab will form and after a while your knee will stop hurting and heal.

However, injuries happen more often than they should, and some are very, very serious. If the injury is too great, it may never heal or could even result in death. Every year around the world more than 900,000 children and teenagers die from injuries. That is almost two deaths every minute of every day. And this is only the tip of the ‘injury iceberg’. For every child or teenager who dies, many others are injured.

Injuries can be prevented!

You’ve seen how every injury has a chain of events that ends with the injury. What the person is doing, how they’re doing it, the things they’re doing it with and where they’re doing it all play a part. If we can change one or more of these things, then we can break the chain and either stop the injury from happening or at least make it smaller. We call this ‘injury prevention’.

Take a look at the neighbourhood below. You’ve seen it before, but it’s a much safer place now. Changes have been made that have stopped the children who live there from getting injured.

We’ve labelled some – can you spot any others?

A fence to stop children from falling into the pond
A barrier to stop children from falling out of the window
A cycle helmet to protect her head
Laws that mean this car has to drive more slowly
Children are MORE LIKELY to be injured than adults. Why?

- Young children have thinner skin than adults, and their skin can be easily hurt.
- Children have softer and, for their size, bigger heads than adults.
- Children don't always know how to keep themselves safe – they haven’t learned yet.
- Children have small arms, legs, hands, feet and fingers that can get caught in small gaps and holes.
- Children are shorter than adults, so they are less likely to be seen (for example, by drivers on the road) and less able to see what’s going on.

Help from an adult to learn how to do things safely

Around the world, more children over 9 YEARS of age die from injuries than from ANY OTHER cause.

A law to say that poisons must be safely packaged