Poisoning

The facts

• 125 children die from poisoning every day.
• The rate of fatal poisoning is highest for children under one year, with a slight peak around 15 years as older teenagers experiment with drugs and alcohol.
• Fatal poisoning rates in low-income and middle-income countries are four times higher than in high-income countries.

What can be done?

✓ Remove any toxic products from your home that do not have to be stored there, such as pesticides and bottled kerosene.
✓ Store all drugs and other poisons (including household cleaning products) behind lock and key or out of the reach of children.
✓ Purchase medication in child-resistant packaging.
✓ Find out if there is a poison control centre in your area, which you can call to receive information in case of a suspected poisoning, and keep the telephone number by your phone.

What else can we do?

• Attend a first aid course that includes a module on how to resuscitate a child.
• Keep a first aid kit in your home and car (this is the law in some countries).
• Read Have Fun, Be Safe, the child-friendly companion to the World report on child injury prevention, with children, and talk to them about how they can keep safe.
• Teach all children to stop, look and listen before crossing a road, and to think about the safest place to cross.

MYTH: If parents supervised their children properly these injuries wouldn’t happen

No parent can supervise their child 24 hours a day. There will always be distractions and lapses in concentration and supervision. Putting in place some of the suggestions in this factsheet will reduce the chances of your child sustaining an injury.

MYTH: The bottle has a “childproof” cap!

Many containers have child-resistant caps. Caps are designed and tested to prevent 80% of children from opening them. That means 20% will still work out how to open the container. Your child might be one of these. Child-resistant caps should be considered, at best, to be a time delay.

“Implementing proven child injury prevention interventions could save more than a thousand children’s lives a day.”

Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO and Mrs Ann Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF

What you can do to keep kids safe from injury

Every day around the world the lives of more than 2000 families are torn apart by the loss of a child to an unintentional injury. Once a child is 9 years old, road traffic injuries, drowning, burns, falls and poisoning together pose the biggest threat to his or her survival.

The World report on child injury prevention brings together what we know about these injuries, making recommendations on how to prevent them and realize children’s right to a safe environment. Implementing proven injury prevention interventions could save more than 1000 young lives a day.

However, there are steps that we, as parents, grandparents, teachers or members of a community, can take to protect children. This fact sheet outlines some of the simple things we can do to keep kids safe from injury.

The facts about child injuries

• Approximately 830 000 children under 18 die every year as a result of an unintentional injury.
• Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for children over 9 years.
• Road traffic injuries and drowning account for nearly half of all unintentional child injuries.
• Tens of millions of children require hospital care every year for non-fatal injuries.
• Road traffic injuries and falls are the main causes of injury-related child disabilities.
• 95% of child injuries occur in low-income and middle-income countries.
• Child injuries remain a problem in high-income countries, accounting for 40% of all child deaths.
• Many high-income countries have been able to reduce their child injury deaths by up to 50% over the past three decades by implementing multisectoral, multipronged approaches to child injury prevention.

Rate of unintentional injuries per 100 000 children, World, 2004

Source: This fact sheet is based on the World report on child injury prevention. To download a copy of the report please go to http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/child/en/

Copies of this document are available from: Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability, World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland, Email: childinjury@who.int
**Road traffic injuries**

**The facts**
- 720 children die from road traffic crashes every day.
- Globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death in 10–19 year olds.
- In low-income and middle-income countries most traffic deaths are among pedestrians, passengers in vehicles or on two-wheelers.
- In high-income countries, most deaths are among novice drivers.
- The most common non-fatal injuries sustained by children are head injuries and fractured limbs.
- Road traffic injuries are also a leading cause of disability for children.

**What can be done?**
- Be a role model: don’t speed, drink and drive, or disobey traffic laws and always buckle up.
- Make sure that children riding in your car are strapped into their seats (two types) depending on type of seat).
- Ensure that all children wear a properly fitted helmet when riding on a bicycle or monobike.
- Enrol teenagers in a graduated driver licensing system, i.e. one where driving is restricted in the first two or more years.
- Encourage that driver teenagers are aware of the perils of disobeying the traffic laws.
- Encourage all children and teenagers to wear white or bright colours or reflective clothing when walking or cycling near traffic to improve their visibility to others.
- Teach all children to stop, look and listen before crossing a road, and to think about the safest place to cross.

**Drowning**

**The facts**
- 480 children die from drowning every day.
- Each year 2.5 million children and teenagers get into trouble in the water and come close to drowning.
- Globally children under the age of five are at greatest risk of drowning – infants can drown in only a few centimeters of water.
- Over 98% of child deaths from drowning occur in low-income and middle-income countries.
- In high-income countries most drowning events involving children happen in swimming pools.

**What can be done?**
- Baby bath seats and flexible solar pool covers are NOT designed to prevent drowning. Please do not leave your baby unattended in a bath on a seat, or outside around the pool which has a cover on it, thinking that they will be safe. Neither of these two products are a substitute for supervision.
- Encourage all children to learn survival swimming.
- Infants are at highest risk of death from burns.
- The death rate from burns in low-income and middle-income countries is eleven times higher than that in high-income countries.
- Infants are at highest risk of death from burns.
- Fire causes the majority of burn-related deaths, in part because smoke inhalation can also be deadly.
- Nearly 75% of burns in young children are from hot liquid, hot tap water or steam.

**Burns**

**The facts**
- 260 children die from burns every day.
- Burns can be caused by hot objects, hot liquids, fire, chemicals, electricity and the sun.
- The death rate from burns in low-income and middle-income countries is eleven times higher than that in high-income countries.
- Infants are at highest risk of death from burns.
- Fire causes the majority of burn-related deaths, in part because smoke inhalation can also be deadly.
- Nearly 75% of burns in young children are from hot liquid, hot tap water or steam.

**What can be done?**
- Do not give first aid before ensuring your own safety (check off electrical current, water before applying any chemicals, etc.).
- Do not apply ointments, all burn creams (to protect from future burns) or raw cotton to the burned area.
- Do not apply ice.
- Do not apply any material directly to the wound in that may cause infections.
- Do not open blisters with a needle or pin.

**Falls**

**The facts**
- 130 children die every day from a fall.
- In some countries, half of the injuries to children taken to emergency clinics are from falling.
- 66% of fatal falls are the result of falls from a height.

**What can be done?**
- Use stair gates to prevent small children falling down stairs and keep stairs clear from objects.
- Install guards on windows that are above the ground-floor.
- Lobby your local council to improve the standard of equipment in your local playground: appropriate surface material (such as rubber or bark), climbing structures and slides at safe heights, regular safety checks, and maintenance all improve the safety of play areas.

**Burns**

**What to do**
- Stop the burning process by applying cold water or allowing the burnt area to remain in contact with cold water for some time.
- To chemical burns, remove or dilute the chemical by splashing the wound with water.
- Obtain medical care if needed.

**Burns**

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