

Accidental Injuries

Submitted by
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Every year, thousands of children are killed or maimed by “freak” accidents. Sadly, many if not most of these occurrences could have been avoided with a little education and prevention. Don’t let these things happen to your children.

Electric garage door openers are a wonderful convenience. They can easily become a deadly trap for children. Children have been crushed or suffocated when caught by a closing door. Make certain that your garage door opener has an instant safety reverse device to stop the door from closing when it meets resistance. Check to insure this safety device is correctly adjusted and recheck it regularly. Additionally, wall push buttons should be mounted out of reach of children.

Tragically, every year, children pull electrical devices (hair dryers, radios, electric razors, etc.) into the bathtub resulting in electrocution. Be aware! A child’s curiosity may be fatal. With young children, they should be supervised while in the bathtub and such electrical devices should be put away where the child won’t have an opportunity to injure or kill him/herself.

Something that many parents do and which have horrifying results is permitting infants to sleep with the adults in their beds. Children have been crushed or suffocated when a sleeping adult rolls over on top of the child or when a limb comes crashing down on a fragile infant’s body. Babies don’t belong in grownup’s beds, period! They belong in cribs.

Older cribs have been the cause of many accidental deaths or injuries. While using “Grandma’s crib” seems romantic, it may prove deadly. Some are dangerous by design while others may contain lead based paints or varnish. Use only safety tested and approved cribs for children.

Accidental drowning occurs in the strangest of circumstances. Unattended children die every week in only inches of water in bathtubs, buckets, swimming pools and the like. A toddler’s oversized head makes them top heavy and very susceptible to such accidents. Never leave a child alone near such objects of curiosity, and empty buckets and turn them upside down when finished with them.

Vending machines have caused the deaths of more than 15 children. Kids have been known to rock these machines back and forth to get pop or candy out of them. Some of these machines may weigh upwards of a half-ton and they come crashing down on the unwary youngster. Make certain the vending machines at your child’s school and recreation centers are bolted to walls, floors, or ceilings. Teach children to never rock such machines.

Balloons cause more fatal choking incidents than any other product. Kids love to suck and chew on them, however, if the youngster suddenly laughs or inhales, there is a dramatic risk the balloon can slide down the windpipe where it is difficult to remove. Even CPR may not help, as you will only be inflating the balloon in the child's throat or lung.

As with plastic balloons, plastic bags cause many needless deaths. It isn't simply the risk of the child placing a bag over his/her head. A baby may simply lay its head against a plastic bag and while breathing, suck the plastic against the nose and mouth causing suffocation. Don't save plastic bags. Knot them and throw them away. Never put children to sleep on or near plastic bags.

Pick-up trucks pose a number of potential risks. Many children ride inside the caps that cover the beds of pick-up trucks. However, many truck beds are not well sealed against exhaust gasses and when confined by the cap, the gasses may asphyxiate the riders. If you should become involved in an accident, unsecured youngsters riding in a truck bed pose an even greater risk. Many children (and pets) have been maimed or killed when turned into flying projectiles during an accident. The bottom line is no one should ride in the bed of a pickup truck, cap or not.

Child Safety Seats

There is an easy way to avoid the deaths or injuries of more than 51,000 children per year in motor vehicle related crashes – child safety seats. In a simple 20-mph crash, a 25-lb. baby will weigh 500 pounds! Most accidents will occur at speeds in excess of 20 mph. Un-restrained child becomes nothing more than another flying projectile in an auto accident. It is a parent's responsibility to insure the safety of their child.

Beginning with the first ride home from the hospital, infants should ride in a semi-reclined, backward facing car safety seat. It must be anchored to the vehicle with a safety belt, and the harness must be fastened. Infant seats are used for infants who weigh less than 20 pounds. Household infant carriers are not designed to protect an infant in a car.

Convertible/Toddler seats must face forward. They are for children who weigh 20-40 pounds. Booster seats are for children who have outgrown convertible seats, and who weigh 40-60 pounds. Once a child has grown sufficiently, get them in the habit of wearing their safety belts. The lap belt must stay low over the thighs and the shoulder belt must not cross the face or neck.