

DOMESTIC ACCIDENTS

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.47211/tg.2022.v09i04.019>**ABSTRACT**

Accidents are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in children. Along with cardiovascular diseases and cancers, accidents currently form the 3rd leading causes of morbidity and mortality in developed and developing countries. Accidents at home are more common than on the roads. Negligence of children by elders at home increases the risk. Domestic accidents can happen to anyone, anywhere. They are unfortunate incidents that occur within the home and can range from minor injuries to more serious consequences. It's essential to be aware of potential hazards and take precautions to minimize the risk of accidents. One common type of domestic accident is falls. Slippery floors, uneven surfaces, or cluttered areas can lead to trips and slips, resulting in injuries such as sprains, fractures, or head trauma. To prevent falls, it's important to keep walkways clear, use non-slip mats, and install handrails where needed. Another significant concern is burns and scalds. Hot surfaces, boiling liquids, or faulty electrical appliances can cause severe burns. To reduce the risk, always supervise children in the kitchen, use oven mitts, and set water heaters to a safe temperature. Accidental poisoning is also a potential danger in the home. Household chemicals, medications, or even certain plants can be toxic if ingested. Keep hazardous substances out of reach of children, properly label containers, and be cautious when using pesticides or cleaning products. Fire-related accidents can have devastating consequences. Faulty wiring, unattended candles, or cooking mishaps can lead to fires. Install smoke alarms, have fire extinguishers readily available, and practice fire safety drills with your family. Lastly, drowning accidents can occur, especially in homes with swimming pools or bathtubs. Never leave children unattended near water, secure pool areas, and teach swimming and water safety skills.

Key Words: Accidents, Potential hazards, slip, burn, drowning, unattended kids.

INTRODUCTION

Accidents are a major cause of morbidity and mortality in children. Along with cardiovascular diseases and cancers, accidents currently form the 3rd leading causes of morbidity and mortality in developed and developing countries. Accidents at home are more common than on the roads. Negligence of children by elders at home increases the risk. A joint report by WHO and UNICEF says that more than 2,000 children die every day as a result of unintentional injuries. Injuries cause almost 40% deaths among toddlers. Accidents at home occur more often when the home routine is changed. Parental carelessness especially mother's lack of supervision and ignorance are the chief factors for accidents at home. (1)

Home accidents are the main cause of mortality and morbidity in early childhood and a major factor in lost productive life. (2,3) The public health experts have created the term "Modern Day Epidemic" for domestic accidents. (4) WHO calls domestic accidents as a priority problem. (5) An infant is fragile, helpless and innocent when it enters the world. It is completely dependent on its care-takers. (6) Children are especially at risk for injury because of their normal curiosity, impulsiveness and desire to master new skills. Also, children try to imitate adult behaviour from an early age. (7)

It is important to know the pattern of trauma in children from developing countries as significant differences exist in socioeconomic pattern and government regulatory policies in comparison with the developed nations. (8) The largest number of accidents happens in the living room, however the most serious accidents happen in the kitchen. (9) The main causes of accidents in the home are falls, fires and burns, suffocation, drowning, choking, poisoning and cuts and lacerations. (10)

Earlier in history, epidemiologists have compared domestic accidents to tuberculosis and called both of them together as "social diseases". 1 The term is pretty relevant in today's time as well where both the entities, in entirely different ways and mechanisms, have managed to infiltrate the social fabric.

TYPES OF DOMESTIC ACCIDENTS

Home is often considered a safe haven for your family. As a result, it is easy to overlook the dangers that are present within the home. It doesn't take much to let your guard down when you're in your own living quarters, but doing so can lead to injuries that could potentially be long-term or even life-threatening. Accidents happen, especially with little ones running around. Many of the common accidents that occur at home are easily preventable, and with these tips, you can keep your entire family safe from the most common home injuries. (10)

1. Slips and Falls

Slipping and falling is common with children; it is inevitable, and usually harmless. However, there are some situations where a simple slip and fall can cause serious harm. Fortunately, you can easily prevent falls from happening by taking small steps to safeguard your home. To decrease the chances of slips and falls occurring, be sure to do the following:

- Remove clutter from stairs and walkways to provide a clear and safe path for your kids.
- All staircases inside and outside of your home should have handrails and sufficient lighting.
- Install grab bars and non-slip mats in your bathroom to make it a no-slip zone.
- Baby gates are a must for parents with young children, as they keep them away from stairs, balconies and landings.
- Avoid purchasing throw rugs. They are a tripping hazard for both the young and the elderly.

2. Poisoning

When household cleaning supplies, soaps, detergents and other products are stored in the cupboards of your home, there is a significant risk of poisoning. According to Parachute Canada, half of all poison cases occur with children under the age of 6, and the Public Health Agency of Canada estimated that approximately three deaths each year for kids under the age of 14 are due to poisoning from household items. Another 900 are hospitalized with serious injuries. You certainly want to take all precautions to ensure that you keep your kids away from dangerous substances. Follow these tips to ensure precautionary measures are in place:

- Store dangerous chemicals, medications and other harmful products on high shelves, and out of reach of children.
- Install childproof locks on cabinets that contain harmful products.
- Never leave medications and harmful products in your purse.
- Always store products in the original container.
- Follow product directions on the container label.

3. Knife-related Injuries

The kitchen can be a dangerous place. Considering that the kitchen is typically the heart of the home, it is necessary to take proper precautions to ensure the safety of your children. Knives and other sharp objects are

often stored in cupboards and on countertops, directly in the reach of children. It is imperative to follow these tips to avoid preventable injuries:

- Store knives out of reach of small children, such as in a locked drawer or in a knife block pushed back on the counter.
- Teach your child about knife safety; to never run in the kitchen or while holding a knife or any sharp object.
- Give small children a plastic knife, and supervise older ones using a real knife.

4. Fire and Burns

Fires are another common household accident that can easily be prevented. Cooking is one of the main causes of home fires, and the kitchen is full of hot appliances and burners that can cause serious harm to your child. Implement fire safety practices to ensure the safety of your entire family, as well as your possessions and your home. Follow these tips to decrease the chances of injuries:

- Install working smoke alarms on every level of your home, and test them frequently.
- Teach your child about the dangers in the kitchen.
- Teach your child about the dangers of fire, and that it should never be played with.
- Be careful when cooking, and use oven mitts, roll up your sleeves, use back burners etc.
- Stay on top of regular maintenance on your chimney, furnace, stove, fireplaces etc.
- Implement a safety and escape plan in case of a fire, and make sure your child memorizes it.

5. Choking and Suffocation

Choking is a rare, but often fatal accident. According to Don't Choke, 40% of unintentional injuries in infants are caused by choking and suffocation. The majority of choking fatalities occur in the first year of life, and approximately 95% of deaths from choking occur in the home. Keep your kids safe by following these steps:

- Never leave your child unattended when eating.
- Do regular house checks (under the bed, on the floor, in between couch cushions, etc.) to ensure that small items won't get in the hands of small ones.
- Remember that if it's small enough to go down the toilet, it is a choking hazard.
- Always follow the recommended ages on toys.
- Remove strings and dangling objects from your household.

PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC ACCIDENTS AMONG MOTHERS OF TODDLERS

Some areas and objects in the house are more prone to cause injuries to a child. Be aware of such possibilities to avoid accidents.

- Staircase: When your child starts crawling, install safety guards across entries to stairs and balconies.
- Balconies and parapet walls/grills: The parapet wall should be tall enough and wide enough to prevent the fall of a child trying to look down over it. Ensure that there are no objects near the parapet wall that a child can climb to then climb on to the parapet wall or the balcony grill. The grill design should not make it easy to climb (not have climbable horizontal members).
- Windows: When your child starts climbing, lock windows—particularly upper-story windows—restrict window openings or shield them with grills or nets having a widest opening of 4 inches.
- Furniture: It should be sturdy and stable—a child should not be able to pull it down or knock it. Any sharp projecting ends or corners should be rounded or padded or covered with corner protectors. Children may run into drawers left pulled out and can get injured. Install drawer guards, if available.
- Flat screen televisions should be fixed to a clamp, or to the wall.
- Glass: Install safety glass in windows and doors or apply shatter-resistant film to windows and doors.
- Tools and weapons: Lock away tools like saws and drills. Keep lawn mowers, chain saws and other sharp tools and guns or knives strictly out of reach of all children and adolescents.
- Baby cots: Cots or beds for small children should not have horizontal bars or footholds that your baby can use to climb out. Space between bars should be 5–9.5 cm (gaps wider than 9.5 cm could trap your child's head or let your child fall out of the cot) and at least 60 cm tall. The lock must not be openable by the child. Check that the mattress is firm.
- Light: Leave a hall light on at night or use sensor lights.
- Floor: Whenever possible, avoid multiple levels or steps on the same floor. A non-slippery floor texture is desirable.
- Bathroom and the kitchen: These are the most accident-prone areas in the house. Whenever, not in use, please lock them. Train the child from a very early age to keep away from the kitchen platform.
- Locks: All locks should be above the level of 4 feet so that a child does not accidentally lock someone in the bathroom/any room nor open it by himself before he becomes self-reliant.

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