

Live Safe. Play Safe.

Preventing childhood injuries from falling



Whether you have a baby, toddler, or school-age child, your home should be a haven where your child can explore safely. After all, climbing and exploring are activities that develop your child's body and mind. Similarly, play is an important part of your child's development. An accidental fall is a risk wherever a child may be; in fact according to Safe Kids USA, falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury for children ages 14 and under. So whether at home or at play, be aware of your child's surroundings and what might be potentially dangerous.

Home

- Any household including a baby or a toddler should have safety gates at the top and bottom of all staircases.
- Safety gates positioned at the top of staircases must be attached to the wall; gates held in place by outward pressure are less secure than those attached to the wall.
- Keep hallways and staircases well-lit and clear of clutter.
- Do not allow children to play on stairs.
- Never leave young children alone on changing tables, beds, couches or other furniture.
- When using baby equipment such high chairs, infant carriers, bumbo seats, swings or strollers, be sure to secure the child with the provided strap.
- Never use baby walkers on wheels—stationary play centers allow babies to practice standing in an upright position without moving into potentially hazardous situations.
- Always place baby carriers on the floor instead of on tabletops or other furniture.

Windows and Porches

- Supervise children at all times around open windows.
- Move furniture away from windows.
- Keep windows locked when they are closed.
- Never rely on window screens to prevent falls.
- Install window stops so that windows are never open more than four inches.
- All windows above the first floor should be equipped with window guards—preferably with emergency release devices in case of fire.

- If you must open a window that does not have a window guard, open it from the top or install window stops so that it may only be opened a few inches.
- Never let children play on fire escapes or high porches, decks or balconies.
- Make sure all railing slats on porches, decks and balconies are secure and no more than 3½ inches apart. Securely attach mesh or plastic barriers to cover openings greater than 3½ inches.

Around and About

- Keep children at play safe with appropriate safety gear and adult supervision.
- The ground beneath all playground equipment should be cushioned with shredded rubber, hardwood fiber mulch or chips, or fine sand—grass and soil cushioning are not as effective at preventing serious injury.
- Playground cushioning should be at least 12 inches deep and extend at least six feet in all directions around the playground equipment.
- When shopping, never place an infant carrier on top of a shopping cart; instead, place the carrier in the basket portion of the cart.

Facts from Safe Kids USA:

- For children ages four and under, 80 percent of falls occur in the home.
- Of children ages five to 14, 50 percent of falls occur in the home and 23 percent occur at school.
- Small children are at risk to fall from, crawl through or become trapped in windows open as few as five inches.

Contact Us

For more information, contact Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Program at **616.391.SAFE** (7233) or visit helendevoschildrens.org/injuryprevention.

