

Child Fall Prevention

- ◆ Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal hospitalizations for all ages. In Washington State from 2008 to 2012, there were 104,001 hospitalizations for falls. Of these, 7,278 were among children ages 0-9. Also during this time there were 3,920 fall-related deaths; eight were among children ages 0-9. Falls among children are often due to external hazards such as stairs, open windows, or playground equipment, and to children's general inability to correctly assess dangers, their curiosity and risk-taking, and lack of fully developed motor skills and coordination. **Many, if not most, child falls are preventable.**
- ◆ Fall-related injuries and deaths happen throughout the age span.
 - Babies and toddlers fall out of unsecured windows or through window screens, off furniture, changing tables and beds or while playing.
 - School-age children fall off playground equipment, while playing, bicycling, and during other activities.
 - Teens and young adults fall when bicycling, hiking, during other sports, etc.

Key Messages to Help Reduce Risks

- ◆ While there are few evidence-based strategies to prevent falls among children and youth, there are some promising ways to reduce risk:
 - Install window guards that meet federal safety standards for emergency exiting. Windows should not open more than four inches to prevent children from falling out. Screens are for keeping out bugs, not keeping in children.
 - Move beds, chairs, and other furniture away from windows.
 - Supervise infants and toddlers when on changing tables or other furniture.
 - Baby walkers that move are dangerous; use a stationary activity center. These give your baby a chance to practice standing and playing more safely. Look for one that is on a stable, non-moveable base. Put it away from hot appliances, windows and window cords, and other items that can be pulled over and fall.
 - Use secure safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
 - Never let your child stand in a grocery cart.
 - Always use the straps and fasten children in securely to carriers, strollers, grocery carts, high chairs, swings, and other equipment or toys.
 - When placing your baby in a carrier, put the carrier on the floor, not on top of a counter, table, or furniture. Do not leave your infant in a carrier on any surface other than the floor or installed in your vehicle.
 - Assure that playground equipment is in good condition and surfaces are shock absorbent. An adult needs to supervise play time.
 - When paying at a retail store, do not sit the carrier or any child on the counter.
- ◆ **Remember:** Never move a child who may be seriously injured after a fall – call 911 and let trained medical personnel move the child with proper precautions.

Information and Resources

- Children's Safety Network www.ChildrensSafetyNetwork.org
- Consumer Product Safety Commission www.cpsc.gov/en/safety-education/neighborhood-safety-network/posters/window-falls
- Safe Kids Oregon Window Falls Prevention www.Stopat4.com
- Safe Kids Washington www.safekidswashington.org
- Safe Kids Worldwide www.safekids.org

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