

Preventing Injuries in Child Care

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Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for young children. Young children are at higher risk of injuries overall, and certain injuries are more probable at different ages. Toddlers are most susceptible to poisoning, preschoolers to drowning, and school-aged children to pedestrian accidents. Children are more likely to be injured when they are not under appropriate adult supervision.

The vast majority of childhood injuries are preventable. Child care providers need to take specific steps to prevent injury in the child care setting. The following are some basic recommendations for preventing injury.

Indoor Safety



(/sites/default/files/w/o/o1/Two infants on floor diversity 180 Pixels.jpg)

Children need the freedom to explore their environment to develop and strengthen connections in their growing brains. The classroom or family child care home needs to be a space where children of all ages can explore safely. Even infants need time and space to roll or crawl. Instead of confining infants to cribs, high chairs, or playpens all day, set up a safe play space where they can play freely. Remember that children are curious and interested in the things they see. Do a safety check each morning before children arrive to ensure that your indoor space is safe. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all sharp or breakable items out of children's reach?
- Are cleaning products, medications, and other poisons in a locked closet or cabinet?
- Are small toys that could cause choking out of the reach of all children under 3?
- Have I inspected all toys to make sure there are no broken or loose pieces or rough edges?
- Are there doors, gates, or other barriers to prevent children from falling down stairs?
- Are shelves and other tall pieces of furniture anchored to the wall to prevent tipping?
- Are sharp edges and corners of furniture covered to protect children?
- Am I ready to supervise children's play carefully and redirect them if they begin to do something unsafe?

Outdoor Safety

Playing outdoors is an important part of young children's development. To ensure that outdoor play is safe, follow these guidelines:



(http://www.extension.org/sites/default/files/w/6/60/5_children_jumping_outside_winter_300_pixels.jpg)

- Playground equipment should be the appropriate size for the children in your group. Infants and toddlers are at greater risk on high platforms and tall slides.
- Playground surfacing needs to be soft and resilient to cushion falls. Surfacing should extend at least 6 feet from playground equipment on all sides, and should be at least 6 to 12 inches deep (appropriate depth is determined by the height of the structure). Safe surfaces for playgrounds include sand, pea gravel, wood chips/mulch, and shredded/recycled rubber mulch. Dirt and grass are not soft enough to be safe surfaces for playgrounds.
- Outdoor play areas should be bordered by a fence or other barrier so children stay within the safe area.
- Careful supervision is essential during outdoor play.

Teach children the following outdoor safety rules:

- Use playground equipment appropriately.
- Stay a safe distance away from moving swings.
- Watch out for others when riding tricycles.
- Wait for the group before crossing the street.
- Watch for cars in streets and parking lots.
- Stay inside designated play areas.

Water Safety

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related death among children under age 15. Special safety precautions are essential whenever children are around water. Drowning can happen very quickly. One study in Orange County, California, found that 70 percent of all preschoolers who drowned were under the care of at least one parent at the time of the drowning, and 75 percent were out of sight for five minutes or less.

- Teaching children how to swim or getting them comfortable in and around the water does not prevent them from drowning.
- A child can drown in only a few inches of water. Small children are top-heavy, and they lack the upper body strength to help themselves out of a potentially dangerous situation. Never leave a young child alone near a sink, bucket or pan of water, or toilet. A few seconds is all it takes for a child to drown.
- If your center or home has a swimming pool, follow these special precautions to keep children safe:
 - Install a high fence around pools.
 - Lock all gates when the pool is not in use.
 - Remove toys from the water after playing to prevent children from trying to reach them.
 - Keep a phone and rescue equipment close by.
- Require children to wear life vests when boating. Never use air-filled swimming aids as a substitute for

a life vest.

- Whenever children are in the water, insist that they be watched by a certified lifeguard. Have extra staff on hand specifically to supervise children in the water.

Other Ideas for Preventing Injury

Protecting children's safety and preventing injuries is one of a child care provider's most important jobs. Be attentive, choose materials carefully, supervise closely at all times, and teach children how to keep themselves safe. The following articles provide more information to help you protect children from injury in child care.

- [Basic Tips to Keep Children in Child Care Safe Outdoors \(/pages/25386/basic-tips-to-keep-children-in-child-care-safe-outdoors\)](/pages/25386/basic-tips-to-keep-children-in-child-care-safe-outdoors)
- [Bathroom Safety in Child Care \(/pages/55841/bathroom-safety-in-child-care\)](/pages/55841/bathroom-safety-in-child-care)
- [Toy Safety in Child Care \(/pages/25868/toy-safety-in-child-care\)](/pages/25868/toy-safety-in-child-care)

Preventing injuries can be challenging, but the steps you take to protect children are worth the effort.

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