

Fall prevention in toddlers and young children

Having kids and watching them grow and learn new skills is a wonderful experience. However, as they move on from one stage to another, the risk of various injuries grow. This is especially true for toddlers. It is special age group. In this age, the children go through extensive social, mental and emotional development. It is also the time when children learn to walk.

Both my clinical experience as a family doctor and national statistics show that the risk of injury increases sharply after the age of 12 months. As children learn to walk and gain better control over their bodies, they suddenly become more prone to falls. In fact, falls are the number one reason of injury among children aged 1-4 years of age. Falls account for almost half of all the injuries, with boy children being even more prone to such injuries.

It all happens in a split second

No doubt that supervision of children is the most effective way of preventing the injury, but it is not possible to keep an eye on them all the time. Therefore it is important to make some changes in the environment and educate them.

Preventing fall injury in a child

As most toddlers get injured at home, making the home a safer place can decrease the chances of injury.

Cribs

Always keep the sides of crib up, when your baby is inside it. As your child grows, make adjustments to the crib like lowering the mattress. Stop using the crib or replace it, if the child's height is about one-fourth more than the height of rails.

Chairs and seats

When a child is sitting on highchairs, use the seat belts for safety.

Beds

Buy a bed that is not very high for a child. Never leave a child alone on the bed and teach a child not to jump on other furniture from the bed.

Windows and Stairs

Falls from windows and stairs can be far more dangerous as compared to beds or other furniture. Use safety gates and guards on stairs and windows. When walking on stairs, teach a child to hold the handrail, and teach him or her not to run on stairs.

Never depend upon the window screen to prevent a child from falling, and keep the windows locked. Avoid keeping any furniture near the window that can help the child to get to the windows.

Other precautions

- Secure the TV and other lighter furniture, as they can fall on kids when playing.
- Don't let kids go alone to the balcony or other high surfaces.
- Use anti-slip rugs at places that are slippery, and use special mats in baths.
- Do not allow kids to play on hard surfaces made of concrete or asphalt.
- Avoid using baby walkers, they are not recommended by most pediatric association, as they increase the risk of fall and injury.
- Use special night lamps to prevent nighttime falls.

What if your child falls?

In case the child has been injured, seeking medical care is logically the first step. Child injury is equally traumatic for parents. It is important for parents to practice self-control. The best strategy after injury, during treatment or recovery, is to try to divert the child's attention from the injury itself. It helps in quicker healing and also prevents stress disorders in parents. Parents should avoid blaming themselves for child injury; they should rather focus on taking precautions and preventions to avert fall and injury.

About the author:

Dr. Preet Bhinder (M.D.)

Dr. Preet is a family physician; he has been practicing medicine for last 15 years and often sees child injury in his day-to-day practice. He understands the traumatic effect of such injuries on the whole family. He is also a passionate writer.

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