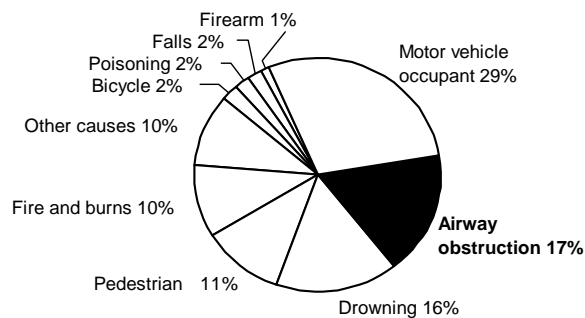




## FACTS ABOUT CHILDHOOD AIRWAY OBSTRUCTION INJURIES

### Leading Causes of Accidental Injury-Related Death for Children 14 and Under 2004



**Airway obstruction injury (including choking, suffocation and strangulation) is the leading cause of accidental injury-related death among infants under age 1.**

- In 2002, 885 children ages 14 and under died from accidental airway obstruction injuries. Of these children, 88 percent were ages 4 and under. The airway obstruction injury death rate among children ages 14 and under declined 11 percent from 1987 to 2002.
- In 2003, nearly 18,000 children were treated in hospital emergency departments in 2002 for airway obstruction injuries.
- Eighty-eight percent of deaths and nearly 80 percent of hospital emergency room visits for airway obstruction injuries were among children ages 4 and under.
- The total annual cost of airway obstruction injury among children ages 14 and under is nearly \$5 billion.

### **Sixty percent of infant suffocation occurs in the sleeping environment.**

- It is estimated that as many as 900 infants whose deaths are attributed to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) each year are found in potentially suffocating environments, frequently on their stomachs, with their noses and mouths covered by soft bedding. Since 1988, at least 100 babies have died of suffocation or SIDS while in playpens with soft bedding or improper or extra mattresses. African-American infants are more likely than white infants to be placed to sleep on their stomachs and on softer bedding.
- Children placed in adult beds are at increased risk for airway obstruction injury. Since 1990, at least 296 children ages 2 and under have died in adult beds as a result of

entrapment in the bed structure. Additionally, 209 children in this age group died in adult beds from smothering as a result of being covered by another person's body.

- Each year, cribs and play yards are involved in nearly 53 percent of all nursery product-related deaths among children ages 5 and under. Cribs (primarily older, used cribs) are responsible for about 26 strangulation and suffocation deaths each year.

**The majority of childhood choking injuries are associated with food. Children are at risk from choking on small, round foods such as hot dogs, candies, nuts, grapes, carrots and popcorn.**

- In 2002, 168 children ages 14 and under died from choking. Forty-two percent choked on food, and 58 percent choked on other items.
- In 2003, 10 children ages 1 to 9 died from choking on or aspirating a toy; three of these deaths involved balloons. At least 110 children, most of them ages 5 and under, have died from balloon-related suffocation since 1973.

**Airway obstruction injuries can also result from entanglement or entrapment.**

- Since 1991, at least 130 children have strangled on window covering cords. The majority of deaths involved outer blind cords and occurred when the cord was hanging near the floor or crib, or when furniture was placed near the cord. Other deaths occurred when children, ages 9 months to 17 months, strangled in loops formed by inner blind cords.
- Since 1985, at least 22 children have died from entanglement of clothing drawstrings, most often hood or neck drawstrings. More than half of drawstring entanglement incidents involved playground slides.
- Children strangle in openings big enough for parts of their bodies but too small for their heads. These include spaces in bunk beds, cribs, playground equipment, baby strollers, carriages and high chairs. Since 1990, at least 57 children, nearly all ages 3 and under, have died due to entrapment in bunk beds.

**Several safety laws and regulations protect children from airway obstruction injury hazards.**

- The Child Safety Protection Act bans any toy intended for use by children under age 3 that may pose a choking, aspiration or ingestion hazard and requires choking-hazard warning labels on packaging for these items when intended for use by children ages 3 to 6.
- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has issued voluntary guidelines for drawstrings on children's clothing to prevent children from strangling in the neck and waist drawstrings of upper outerwear garments, such as jackets and sweatshirts.
- In 1999, the CPSC voted to issue a mandatory standard for bunk beds to address entrapment hazards. The standard restricts opening sizes, requires guardrails and specifies company identification and age-specific warning labels to be present on all new bunk beds.