



FACTS ABOUT CHILDHOOD FALLS

Falls are common and, at some stages of childhood, almost everyday occurrences. However, falls are the leading cause of accidental injury for children, accounting for more than half of nonfatal injuries.

- In 2002, 95 children ages 14 and under died from accidental falls. The falls injury death rate among children ages 14 and under declined 45 percent from 1987 to 2002.
- In 2003, more than 2.3 million children ages 14 and under were treated in hospital emergency rooms for fall-related injuries.
- Children ages 4 and under are at the greatest risk for falls, accounting for 56 percent and more than 40 percent of childhood fall-related deaths and injuries respectively.
- More than 80 percent of fall-related injuries among children ages 4 and under occur in the home. Among children ages 5 to 14, 45 percent of fall-related injuries occur in the home and 23 percent occur at school.
- Nine percent of fall-related injuries associated with products (e.g., baby walkers, windows, playground equipment) result in hospitalization, more than two times the hospitalization rate of all other product-related injuries.
- Most children who die from or are severely injured by falls suffer from head injuries.
- The total annual cost of fall-related deaths and injuries among children ages 14 and under is more than \$92.9 billion – more than one-quarter of all childhood accidental injury-related costs.

Certain groups of children are at higher risk for fall-related injuries.

- Males are more than twice as likely as females to die from fall-related injuries.
- Children with disabilities who are minimally mobile may be at increased risk of falling. Falls are the most commonly reported injury among wheelchair users.
- Children of low-income families are more likely to be injured from falls due to lack of adult supervision and deficiencies in the environment, including aging or deteriorating housing.
- African-American and Hispanic children are at greater risk of falls from heights, probably due to their increased likelihood of living in urban, multiple-story, low-income housing.

Each year, an estimated 15 children ages 14 and under die and more than 200,000 are treated in hospital emergency rooms for playground equipment-related injuries.

- Falls account for approximately 80 percent of all playground-related injuries and more than one-fifth of fatalities. Head injuries are involved in 75 percent of all fall-related deaths associated with playground equipment.
- Playground equipment guidelines have been developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and American Society for Testing and Materials. At least seven states have enacted some form of playground safety legislation.

Children are more likely to die or be severely injured from window-related falls than from falls associated with any other product.

- Each year, approximately 18 children ages 10 and under die from window fall-related injuries.
- An estimated 4,700 children ages 14 and under are treated in hospital emergency departments annually for injuries sustained from falling out of windows; 28 percent of these children require hospitalization. Head injuries account for the majority of these injuries.
- Window falls tend to occur in urban areas, low-income neighborhoods and deteriorating or overcrowded housing.
- Seventy percent of window fall-related deaths occur during spring and summer.
- Children falling from windows are more likely to be male, under age 5 and playing unsupervised at the time of the fall.
- In June 2000, ASTM established voluntary safety standards for window guards, which ensure that guards designed for single-family homes or the lower floors of apartment buildings have simple emergency-release mechanisms for use in the event of a fire.
- An education and window guard distribution program in New York City, combined with window guard legislation, demonstrated a 35 percent reduction in window fall-related fatalities after two years.

Each year, an average of two children die as a result of baby walker-related injuries.

- In 2003, more than 3,700 children ages 4 and under were treated in hospital emergency rooms for baby walker-related injuries.
- Three out of four children who fall in walkers also fall down the stairs; these injuries tend to be the most severe and are more likely to result in head injury and hospitalization.
- Nearly 80 percent of infants who suffer baby walker injuries are being supervised; more than half of the time, the caregiver is in the room with the child at the time of the incident.
- All baby walkers manufactured after June 30, 1997, must meet the voluntary and mandatory ASTM standards, which require that baby walkers either be too wide to fit through a standard doorway or have features that stop the walker at the edge of a step.