

Healthwise. SVUH

Issue 59, December 2009

CHILD SAFETY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE HOME

Children both need and want to explore their world. While children get on with the important work of being explorers, parents, guardians and carers must make sure that their child's world is as safe as possible.

The more mobile children get, the more adventurous they get. But all around them, particularly in the comfort of their own home, there are many seen and unseen dangers.

Certain injuries can occur whatever a child's age, however, children in the 0 to 5 age group are most at risk of injuries in the home. That is why the focus of this article is within the home.

Most common causes of injury in children are: falls, cuts, burns/scalds, poisoning, choking and road traffic accidents.

It is a heartbreaking fact that in Ireland, each year, approximately, 75 children die, 15,000 children admitted to hospital and 150,000 treated in Accident & Emergency departments as a result of injuries. This is only the tip of the iceberg as we know that many more injuries are treated by GPs or at home.

Research has shown that:

- 50 –70 % of all child injuries in the 0-5 age group occur in the home with children between the ages of one to three years have the highest incidence of unintentional injuries. However the risk of having an accident at home appears to decrease after the age of 5.
- Boys have a higher risk of accidental injury than girls at every age.
- Within the home, the kitchen is the most common place for accidents to occur; 40 % of all home injuries occur here.
- Unintentional injuries within the home appear to peak between the hours of 5-7pm with a smaller peak between 1-3pm. The types of injuries presenting appear to have a pattern and are linked to the timing of certain activities within the home (Mealtimes, T.V. medicine times) i.e. Burns/Scalds were more likely to occur at mealtimes; Poisonings were more likely to occur before 11am.

So what can you as parents, guardians and carers do to promote child safety and help prevent unintentional injuries in your children.

The good news is that 9 out of 10 unintentional injuries can be prevented by thinking safe and acting safe in everything we do. However we must not expect children to think safe and act safe. That is why we must supervise our children at all times and teach them how to be safe.

The key message where child safety is concerned is:

- Watch your child at all times as they do not understand danger.
- We know that children also learn by example – what they see, they often copy. So lead by example.
- Make yourself aware of the many pieces of safety equipment you can buy to help keep your child safe in and around the home. Please see the checklist on the next page of this newsletter.
- Check for dangers in your home where your child is concerned and correct them. The best way to do this is to spend a few minutes in the centre of each room of your home and in your garden and check are there any dangers in these places for you as an adult. Then get down to the height of your child and repeat this check. You will be amazed to see what these places look like from the height of a child and in turn you will identify more potential dangers. It is most important to correct these dangers as soon as you identify them because the longer you leave them the more chance of an injury happening to your child.

A DVD 'Child Safety inside and outside the Home – a guide for parents, guardians and children' was developed and launched by the National Injury Prevention Committee (NIPC) and is available, free of charge.



The aim of this DVD is to guide and support parents and guardians to make the necessary changes in their homes and surrounding environments that will promote child safety and help prevent unintentional injuries to children.

Continued from page one....

The DVD is divided into sections based on the most common causes of injuries amongst children in the home and its surroundings. The sections are: Road Safety; Falls Prevention; Burns and Scalds Prevention; Poisoning Prevention; Choking Prevention; Fire Safety; Water Safety; Farm Safety.

Further information is included on: Basic First Aid & Life Support; Guidelines to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome; How to make an emergency call - aimed at children; The Safe Cross Code. A choice of subtitles is included - Irish, English, Chinese, French, Polish, Arabic and Russian.

Our aim is to get a copy of this valuable DVD out to every family in the country and to greatly encourage families to watch it. To order a free copy of this valuable DVD, you may contact any of the following:

- Contact your regional/local Health Promotion Service
- Email: brenda.shannon@hse.ie
- Phone: 043 3344084



Irish Healthcare Awards 2009 SVUH wins award

SVUH received the award for the Best Public Health Initiative at the recent Irish Healthcare Awards for the implementation of the first Smoke Free Hospital Campus policy in Ireland.

Three other SVUH projects were nominated for an award in different categories:

- “Establishment of the Intravenous Therapies suite” - Best Hospital Project Category
- “Defro - Text Messaging Application” - Best Use of Information Technology
- “Nurse led biologics telephone review clinic” - Best Nursing Project of the Year.

Read more about SVUH success in Newsround article.

Remember: Enjoy sharing these wonderful early years with your children as they explore the world around them, and make their world a safe world.

CHILD SAFETY AWARENESS EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

To help keep your child safe at home you need the following:

1 SMOKE ALARMS Tick Yes ✓ or No X

You need smoke alarms

- Ensure the smoke alarms are working.
- Check batteries often.
- Make a fire escape plan and practice it often.

2 SMOKE FREE HOME Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Never smoke near your child.
- Reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death (Cot Death) by creating a 'Smoke-Free Home'.

3 CAR SEAT Tick Yes ✓ or No X

You must have a car seat for your child.

Ensure:

- It's correct for their weight and height.
- It's fitted correctly.
- Your child is always securely strapped into the seat.

4 FIREGUARD Tick Yes ✓ or No X

Always guard open fires and heaters with:

- A fireguard and a sparkguard.
- Secure fireguard to wall.
- Never place anything on fireguard or sparkguard.

5 STAIR GATES Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Always use stair gates at top and bottom of stairs.
- Always ensure they are secured correctly.

6 SOCKET GUARDS Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Always use socket guards.
- Turn off switches when not in use.

7 SHORT FLEXES Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Keep all electrical items out of reach of children.
- Keep flexes out of reach of children.
- Use short flex for kettle where possible.

8 CUPBOARD SAFETY LOCKS Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Use cupboard safety locks.
- Always keep household products out of reach of children in their original child-resistant containers.
- Never use soft drinks bottles for storage.

9 WINDOW SAFETY Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Secure all windows with window restrictors that don't require tools for opening.
- Avoid placing furniture near windows.

10 MEDICINE CABINET Tick Yes ✓ or No X

- Keep all medicines in their original child-resistant containers and locked away in a medicine cabinet or in a locked press.
- Return old and unused medicines to your chemist.

11 FIRST AID KIT Tick Yes ✓ or No X

Have a First Aid Kit in your home.

Your kit should contain:

- Scissors
- Bandages
- Band Aids
- Absorbent Pad
- Tape
- Antiseptic or Antiseptic Wipes
- Burn Cream

Do you know First Aid? Learn now!
For further details contact:

Order of Malta 01 6684891	Irish Red Cross 01 6424600	St. John's Ambulance 01 6688077
Irish Heart Foundation 01 6685001	Civil Defence 0505 25310	

When purchasing any child safety equipment please ensure it shows this safety symbol:



START NOW FOR A HEALTHY SMILE FOR YOUR CHILD

Good oral health habits are essential to maintain healthy teeth and gums throughout life. It is never too early or too late to start. Research now shows that the health of your mouth can reflect the state of your general health. There are associations between oral infections and diabetes, heart disease and preterm births.

Dental decay (also called caries) is the single most common chronic disease of childhood (five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever). It is a preventable disease. Prevention of disease depends on keeping teeth clean to reduce the amount of bacteria on the teeth and reducing the frequency and amount of sugar containing foods and drinks. Fluoride in tap water and toothpaste will also help strengthen the teeth.

Dental decay occurs when the bacteria in the mouth uses dietary sugars to produce acid that dissolves the teeth.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Before the birth of your baby

Expectant parents (yes, dads too...) should not neglect their own dental health. This means regular dental visits and daily tooth brushing and a well balanced diet.

During pregnancy frequent vomiting, nausea, increased calorie intake and hormonal changes can alter your oral health. At least one dental check visit is required to manage active disease. It is safe to have dental treatment during pregnancy. Remember that smoking during pregnancy may affect the birth weight of your baby and may also affect the teeth which are forming during this time.

After your baby is born

Teeth should be cleaned as soon as they emerge (usually about 6 months of age). Use a soft, small toothbrush and tap water. Do not use toothpaste in children before 2 years of age. Look into your baby's mouth while you are cleaning the teeth. It is especially important to clean your child's teeth at bedtime. Production of saliva is reduced during sleep resulting in less protection of teeth. It is important that no food or drink is given after brushing.

Children should be encouraged to brush their own teeth, but will need parental supervision. Toddlers can learn by watching and will happily imitate your own tooth brushing. However, most children do not have enough co-ordination to brush effectively on their own until age 6-8 years of age (they also cannot spit effectively, so mouth washes are not recommended). Parents should allow their children brush first but should finish the task for children up to age 8 years.

As baby teeth come in, there are spaces between the teeth which may close over once all the teeth erupt. When a tooth brush can no longer clean between the teeth, it is time to start flossing for your child. Your dentist will demonstrate how to floss your child's teeth safely.

Article by: Dr. Anne C O'Connell
Senior Lecturer/ Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry,
Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)

Feeding practices:

Remember that you are in charge of what your child (and your family) eats and drinks. It is important that their diet protects rather than damages their teeth. Breast feeding is best for your baby. Frequent feeding is encouraged during the first 6 months of life, before the teeth emerge. As soon as the teeth are in the mouth, they can become decayed. After this time, incorrect feeding with either breast or bottle can cause damage to your child's teeth.

Some tips to help protect your child's teeth once they erupt:

- Only milk/formula in bottle
- No bottle/sippy cup to bed
- No *at will* breast/bottle feeding
- Wean from bottle 12-18 months



For most infants, a cup can be introduced at about 8 months, and complete weaning from a bottle can be accomplished between 12-18 months. After this time use of the bottle becomes a habit and is not required for nutrition - there is no reason to retain a feeding bottle once the child gets adequate nourishment through normal meals.

A healthy diet and appropriate snacks will help with your child's growth and development. A variety of foods should be encouraged and the addition of sugar and sweeteners should be avoided. Many people find it surprising that natural/healthy foods contain sugar e.g.. ketchup, bananas, raisins, yoghurt, plain biscuits. It is important to read food labels as these 'hidden sugars' can cause damage to your teeth.

Just as important as the amount of sugar is the frequency with which it is eaten. Snacking should be limited to 2-3 times per day so that the mouth has time to recover between food intakes. Sweet and sugary foods and drinks do not cause as much damage when eaten at mealtimes, so treats can be given at the end of a meal.

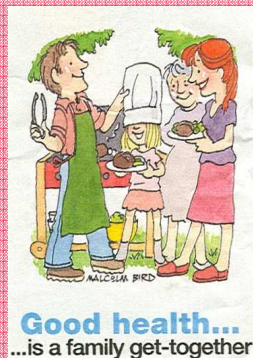
Families eating together

Family mealtimes are becoming a thing of the past with longer working hours, longer commutes and a litany of after school activities that children have to be ferried to and from. These all impede parents' ability to squeeze in a much needed family meal. With the advent of convenience and fast foods, home cooked meals have been thrown to the wayside and this has contributed to the increase in childhood obesity. It is estimated that childhood obesity rates are expected to double by the end of this decade to 287 million children worldwide creating a major global health issue. And believe it or not families eating meals together can make a big difference.

Developing good eating habits early on can help your children be healthier for the rest of their lives. Parents are role models for good eating behaviours and good table manners. Children learn their eating behaviours from parents and if parents eat a variety of foods that are low in fat and sugar children learn to like these foods. The Journal of the American College of Nutrition suggests that children who eat meals with their families will consume more vegetables, lean meats and wholegrain foods rather than fast food or unhealthy snacks. Sensible portion sizes are also something that needs to be taught at home so children don't grow up thinking supersize is normal. Although it is entrenched in our national psyche to prevent food going to waste, try to avoid the "clean your plate" mentality as this encourages children to ignore their body's cues. Let children serve themselves from the age of 5 years as this teaches them to eat until they are satisfied but not uncomfortably full. Family meals are also a social occasion and help develop children's language skills.

Tips for family mealtimes:

1. Be prepared. Keep healthy ingredients on hand so meal preparation is easy and less time consuming.
2. Get the family involved in preparing the meal and setting the table. Children enjoy being included in a family event.
3. Keep it simple. Balanced meals, not elaborate meals are key. Try and make meals that appeal to everyone in the family.
4. Avoid distractions. Turn off the TV, phones, play-station and focus on the meal.



Catch up on the classroom gossip! Mealtimes are a social occasion and allow each family member the opportunity to talk about their day.

Jenny Caffrey, Dietitian

Smoke Free Policy - One Year On

As you are aware a smoke free campus policy was introduced in St. Vincent's University Hospital on the 1st January 2009, which prohibits smoking on the campus including the hospital grounds.

This has been in place for almost a year now and we would like to see how it is working. As part of this process, a survey will be carried out in January 2010 to monitor the acceptability of the policy among staff and its influence on smoking rates. We plan to survey 300 hospital staff, as part of a



random representative sample, in person or by telephone. The questionnaire will be short and will take only 5 minutes to complete.

If you have not been contacted to complete the survey by 29th January 2010, you will not be asked to do so. If you have any queries or comments on the matter, please contact Irene Gilroy on extension 3693 or 01 221 3693.

'The Way of Health' Treasure Hunt

The 2009 Hospital Challenge Day event was 'The Way of Health' Treasure Hunt around the SVUH Slí na Sláinte route. The aim of this event is to get as many people as possible to do 15 minutes of physical activity in a fun way. Each person who completed the treasure hunt was entered into a draw.

The winning entry was picked from all those submitted, by Mr. Gary O'Toole, Chairman of the Health Promotion Committee.

The lucky winner was Rebecca Bowen, P.A. to Mr. Bill Maher. She is photographed here receiving her prize from Prof. Cecily Kelleher, Head of Dept. Preventive Medicine and Health Promotion.



Healthwise February 2010—DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: Contributions for next issue of Healthwise should be sent to Irene Gilroy, Health Promotion at i.gilroy@svuh.ie by 4th February 2010.