

factsheet

child accident facts

This factsheet presents background information mainly for people working with children and families, and students undertaking projects.

Child Accident Prevention Trust publishes a range of resources for parents, carers and older children, containing comprehensive safety advice. A complete list of these resources – leaflets, booklets, posters, guides, etc – can be found at www.capt.org.uk together with details of how to obtain them.

How many children are injured in accidents?

In the UK in 2008, 239 children aged under 15 died as the result of injury or poisoning. (England – 196; Wales – 12; Scotland – 23; Northern Ireland – 8).

Accidental injury is one of the biggest single cause of death in UK for children over the age of one. More children die each year as the result of accidents than from illnesses such as leukaemia or meningitis.

Every year over 2 million children are taken to a hospital after having an accident. Around half of these accidents happen at home. These are the accidents we know about. Many more children are hurt in accidents but are treated at home or by a family doctor and so are not counted in official statistics.

Are children's accidents increasing?

The number of children's accidents has been declining steadily. In 1997 over 2.5 million children were taken to hospital after an accident. In 1998 this fell to 2.4 million and the number had dropped again to 2.28 million by 1999. The 2002 figure was 2.01 million. Accidental deaths also shown a steady fall although children from the poorest families are at much greater risk than those from the most affluent households.

What type of accidents do children have in the home?

In 2002, almost 900,000 children aged under 15 had an accident in the home with over 475,000 of these being under five.

Falls

The largest number of non-fatal injuries happen when children fall. In 2002 390,000 children aged under 15 were taken to UK hospitals after a fall at home. Most falls are either slips or trips on the same level. Babies and young children are also hurt after falling from one level to another (such as from a chair, bed or changing table) or on or from stairs.

As with most home injuries, the under fives are most at risk. In 2002 230,000 children under five were taken to hospital after a fall. Nearly six in ten of these accidents involved boys.

Burns and scalds

In 2002 almost 37,000 children aged under 15 were taken to hospital after an accident in the home resulting in a burn or scald. Scalds happen more often than burns and the most frequent cause of injuries are hot drinks.

House fires cause the most accidental deaths of children in the home. Eighteen children aged under 11 years died in house fires in 2005. Many of these deaths would have been caused by smoke inhalation.

Poisoning

In 2002 over 26,000 children under 5 years were taken to hospital after a suspected poisoning, the great majority being in the home. Fortunately the vast majority of cases of suspected poisoning require little or no further treatment.

How many accidents happen on the roads?

While falls account for the largest numbers of children's accidents both in the home and outside, road accidents cause the largest number of serious injuries and deaths.

In 2008, almost 23,000 children aged under 16 years were hurt in road accidents on UK roads. (See CAPT's Road Accidents factsheet for further information) 131 of these children were killed and a further 2,777 were injured seriously enough for them to be admitted to hospital or suffer a fracture.

What other accidents do children have outside the home?

Almost 1.1 million children under 15 were taken to hospital in 2002 after having an accident outside their home. From the age of about seven children become more likely to be injured when out and about than at home – reflecting where they spend the majority of their leisure time.

In 2002, among 5-14 year olds:

- almost 180,000 children were injured while playing sport. Ball sports such as football or basketball cause the most accidents.
- more than 360,000 children were injured in school, reflecting the proportion of their time that is spent there.

Over 33,000 children were injured in public playgrounds in 2002.

Further information

The statistics used in this factsheet are drawn from a number of sources. The government's Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System that collected information throughout the UK from 1978 was closed down in May 2003. The enquiry service will be maintained for 5 years. Enquiries should be directed to Information Centre, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Edgbaston Park, 353 Bristol Road, Birmingham B5 7ST, email: infocentre@rospa.com, fax: 0121 248 2001, tel: 0121 248 2066.

Copies of the Annual Reports of the Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System can be downloaded from <http://www.ndad.nationalarchives.gov.uk/CRDA/58/DD/1/detail.html>. The reports for 1998 – 2002 inclusive can be downloaded from <http://www.hassandlass.org.uk/query/reports.htm>. Visit www.hassandlass.org.uk to interrogate the database for 200-2002 yourself.

Separate information on deaths and different types of accidents is available for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the internet.

Factsheets with more detailed information on a variety of accident topics can be found on the Child Accident Prevention Trust website, www.capt.org.uk or can be provided by post on receipt of a stamped address envelope and a list of the subjects you require.

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