

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 home accidents?

Over 40% of all childhood accidental injuries occur at home and in the garden.

In 2005 in Great Britain, 75 children under 15 died in accidents in the home, with 49 of these (65%) being under five. (England and Wales – 74 deaths, Scotland – 1 death).

In 2002 in the UK:

- Almost 900,000 children under 15 visited hospital with accidental injuries that had happened at home
- Nearly 480,000 of children injured accidentally at home were under five years old

What are the most common types of home accidents?

Falls account for over 40% of all home accidental injuries to children. They are by far the most common single cause of home accidental injury.

Collisions with a person or object are the second most common type of accidental home injury and the only one where the injury rates are approximately the same for children of all ages. Typically these accidents happen when children run in to objects, run in to each other or are struck by a falling object.

The need to remove a foreign body that has been swallowed, inhaled or is stuck elsewhere was the second most common cause of hospital attendance for accidental home injury in 2002 with over 50,000 attendances, almost 40% being aged between 5 and 14 years.

Burns and scalds are another common type of home injury. In 2002 there were almost 37,000 hospital attendances. Burns and scalds particularly affect babies and very young children with scalds from hot drinks being the most common cause.

The fourth most common reason for children being taken to hospital is suspected poisonings. These happen when parents or carers think that children have consumed medicines, household cleaners, DIY or gardening chemicals. Nine out of ten suspected poisonings involve children under five years old.

Where do most home accidents happen?

Most accidents happen in the lounge/living/dining room – probably reflecting where children spend most of their time. The next most common places in the home for accidents to happen are: the kitchen, bedroom and stairs.

What causes accidents to happen in the home?

There are potential hazards within every home such as hot water, household chemicals, stairs, fireplaces, matches, alcohol and sharp objects such as knives or scissors.

The design of houses can contribute to accidents. Features such as balconies, spiral or open staircases, ponds, glass doors or open plan kitchens can all increase the risk of accidents happening.

Young children are not able to assess risk for themselves. They also have poor coordination and balance and need to touch and explore to learn about the world around them. As children get older they learn new skills and begin to understand what they are able to do safely but need to test out their new abilities and to feel that they are taking some risks. These factors all mean that children are particularly vulnerable to accidents in the home.

What can be done to prevent home accidents happening?

Children grow and learn new skills rapidly. It is important that the adults who care for them know what risks each stage brings. It is impossible to 'childproof' a home but knowledge of the potential for accidents and of effective safety measures can reduce the risk of serious injury.

Detailed safety advice is given in the extensive range of leaflets and booklets that **capt** publishes. Sample copies can be viewed and downloaded from <http://www.capt.org.uk>. You will also find information on how to obtain printed copies, both as samples and in bulk.

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 <http://www.hassandlass.org.uk> to interrogate the database for 2000-2002 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, <http://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.

Revision date: January 2008

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