

factsheet

safety equipment

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

More advice on accident prevention can be found in **capt's** leaflets, which are written for parents and carers, and in other factsheets. Sample of **capt's** leaflets and copies of factsheets can be downloaded from **capt's** website www.capt.org.uk.

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 killed and injured in accidents each year?

Every year in the UK over 2.25 million children are taken to hospital with accidental injuries. In 2007, 264 children under 15 were killed in accidents in the UK (England and Wales – 223; Scotland – 20; Northern Ireland – 21).

Does safety equipment make a difference?

Some safety equipment has been proven to save lives and reduce serious injury. Such equipment includes child car seats, smoke alarms and bicycle helmets. Other items of equipment have not had their effectiveness tested but may still help to keep children safe.

Nothing can replace supervision, especially of young children, but safety equipment can make it easier to supervise children by creating a safer environment.

Below are some examples of the ways safety equipment can help minimise risk

Falls

- **Safety gates and barriers** intended to stop babies and toddlers climbing stairs and falling down them. They can also be used to prevent children from entering a particularly hazardous area such as the kitchen. They are designed to be used with children up to about two years old – older children may be able to climb over them.
- **Window latches and window guards** reduce the chance of children falling out of windows. Effective latches prevent windows from opening more than 6.5cm. Latches should be fitted on all upstairs windows and, any other window that a child could climb through.
- **Five-point harnesses** prevent falls from a high-chair or pushchair.
- **Impact-absorbing surfaces** placed under play equipment or at the bottom of stairs and outdoor-steps can help reduce injuries resulting from falls. **Mats for indoor play** can also prevent injuries on tiled, concrete or wooden floors – but care should be taken to make sure they do not slip.
- **Anti-slip products** help reduce the chance of slipping. Stickers can be put on the floor or bath, or bath safety mats may be used.

- **Corner protectors** can reduce impact if a child falls against sharp corners of furniture. Many types of corner protectors are available. They clip, slide or stick into place.
- **Low wattage night lights** are designed to enable children to see their way to the toilet or other rooms during the night without tripping over or bumping into objects.

Fire safety

For more advice on all aspects of fire prevention in the home contact the fire prevention department of your local fire and rescue service. You can find the number in your local phone book.

- **Smoke alarms** give people vital extra time to either extinguish a fire, if it is small, or to evacuate the building. Alarms should be tested regularly to be sure they are in working order.
- **Fire extinguishers** could be used to put out small fires. They should be used with caution – different extinguishers are used on different types of fire. Using the wrong fire extinguisher can make the situation worse. If in doubt – leave the fire and get out of the building.
- All open fires and heaters should be guarded to stop children touching hot surfaces or flames. **Fire and heater guards** come in a variety of styles and many different materials. Make sure the guard is sturdy and will not move if a child pushes or falls on it.
- Manufacturers claim that **cooker and hob guards** prevent children from reaching elements and/or pulling pots off the stove. Some of the designs are inadequate and children can poke their fingers through to the heat source. Guards can make lifting a pan awkward so extra care should be taken.
- **Child-resistant cigarette lighters** require double action to ignite. Child-resistant lighters are more difficult for a small child to operate, they are not “child-proof”.

Glass safety

- **Safety glass** should ideally be installed in all glass doors, windows and glass furniture that small children may run into or fall against.
- **Safety film** should be used to toughen glass and prevent it from splintering if broken. It can be applied to existing glass.

Hot water safety

- **Running cold water into a bath before adding hot water or using a thermostatically controlled mixing valve** can reduce the risk of serious scalds happening.
- **Curly cords for kettles** shorten the length of kettle cords so that they do not trail where children can reach them.

Poisons

- Child resistant **locks for doors, cupboards, fridges and dishwashers** should be installed to keep poisons, such as medicines, cleaners, paints and chemicals as well as sharp objects such as knives and tools safely out of the reach of children.
- **Child resistant closures and packaging** are used on prescription medicine containers, and on some poisonous products such as household cleaners and chemicals.

Safety barriers and door safety

- **Child resistant catches for drawers and cupboards** can prevent small children opening cupboards and drawers that may contain potentially dangerous objects or substances.
- **Fences and child resistant gate latches** should be used to keep children safely in the garden away from traffic.

- **Playpens** can be used to contain young children and keep them away from dangerous areas.
- **Door slam protectors** are designed to stop children's fingers being trapped in doors. They effect the hinge and handle sides.

Travel safety

- **Child car seats** are known to reduce the likelihood of serious injury to children in the event of a road crash. A car seat must suit the child's weight and stage of development, fit the car and be correctly installed. Car seats must be used correctly with the harness straps adjusted to fit snugly for every journey. Children under 1.35m who are less than 12 years old are required to use baby or car seats by law.
- All children should wear **correctly fitting bicycle helmets** when cycling to reduce the risk of serious head injury should they fall or be involved in an accident.

Costs

Some essential safety equipment, such as car seats and safety gates can be expensive. Many can be bought second hand or shared between friends or family with children at different ages and stages. Some local authorities also run low cost loan schemes – details should be available from health visitors or the local council.

Child Accident Prevention Trust recommends that child car seats are bought new unless you know for certain that the seat has never been dropped or been in even a minor crash. It is also important to check that full instructions are included, no parts are missing, no parts are broken or worn-out and there are no sharp edges.

Further information

Some safety items are covered by safety standards. These include child car seats, safety gates, fireguards, harnesses and smoke alarms. Information about the standard appears on the label or packaging.

British Standards Institution (BSI)
389 Chiswick High Road
London W4 4AL
Tel 020 8996 9001
www.bsi-global.com

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.

Revision date: April 2009

CHILD ACCIDENT PREVENTION TRUST Canterbury Court (1.09) 1-3 Brixton Road LONDON SW9 6DE
t 020 7608 3828 f 020 7608 3674 e safe@capt.org.uk www.capt.org.uk

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