

## Ten Key Facts about Child Injury in Australia

**1. Each year** about **300** Australian children (aged 0-14 years) are **killed** and **60,000 hospitalised** by unintentional injuries – the kind often referred to as ‘accidents’. Many of these can be easily prevented by simple means.

**2. Injuries** are the **leading cause of death** in Australian children aged one to fourteen, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in this age group. More children die from injury than of cancer, asthma and infectious diseases combined.

**3. After respiratory illnesses** like asthma, injuries are the **second leading cause of child hospitalisation**.

**4. Child injuries cost** the nation an estimated **1.5 billion** dollars annually. In WA alone direct hospital costs are more than **14 million** dollars annually.



**5. Unintentional injuries** make up around **95% of all child injury deaths**, compared to 5% for intentional injuries from abuse, violence, suicide and neglect.

**6. Child injury deaths** have been **halved since 1979**, from about two a day to one per day. While good progress has been made, Kidsafe estimates **a further 80 deaths and 20,000 hospitalisations could be prevented** annually by implementing known safety countermeasures.



**7. Young children** under the age of five years are **most at risk** of unintentional injury, and account for around half of all child injury deaths.

**8. Child deaths** from unintentional injury are most commonly the result of:

- **car crashes**
- **child pedestrians** being hit by motor vehicles
- **drowning**, in particular young children killed in home pools
- **house fires**

Together these four causes account for **75% of all child injury deaths**.

**9. Hospitalisations** of **young children**, from unintentional injury is most commonly the result of:

- **falls**, e.g. from nursery equipment
- **poisoning**, e.g. from medicines and household cleaners
- **scalds**, e.g. from hot drinks/food and hot tap water
- **choking** and **dog bites**.

For school aged children, the leading causes of hospitalisation are:

- **falls**, e.g. falls from playground equipment, especially for children aged five to nine years
- **cutting and piercing** injuries, e.g. cuts sustained by children falling through plate glass
- **car passenger** injuries
- **pedestrian** injuries.

**10. The most common place** for young children to be injured is **in their own home**. As children get older, injuries in community settings such as playgrounds, sports fields, at school and on our roads become more common. Ensuring **the safety of our homes, roads and communities is paramount** for keeping children safe.



## Six Home Features that help keep kids safe

### How safe are our homes?

Three out of four serious injuries to young children occur in the place you'd think they would be safest – their own home.

Try checking your home against the following list of home safety features:

1. **Pools (and spas)** that are fully fenced, with well maintained, self-closing gates.

#### Why?

Young children drown quickly and silently. Around 20 children under five drown each year in unfenced pools or pools with poorly maintained fences or gates.

2. **Hot water** from bathroom taps set at a delivery temperature of 50°.

#### Why?

Hot water burns like fire. Many Australian homes have hot water coming from their taps at temperatures that can burn a child's skin in one second.

3. **Barriers** such as gates on stairs and fireguards in place to keep children away from hazards.

#### Why?

Falls down stairs and steps are common and because young children are 'top heavy', head injuries can often occur. Babies and toddlers don't understand "hot". They are attracted to bright colours – like the flames of a fire – and may touch hot surfaces while simply exploring their world.

4. **Child resistant catches** fitted to cupboards where dangers like medicines, cleaners, matches and lighters are stored.

#### Why?

Young children are curious and don't understand danger. Telling them "not to touch" is not enough to keep them safe. Dangerous products need to be stored away safely.



5. Install **smoke alarms** test them regularly and change the battery once a year.

#### Why?

House fires continue to claim Australian lives every year. Young children are at risk as they need adults to rescue them in time. Smoke alarms provide a warning that may be critical to survival.

6. **Play areas** fenced off from the street and the driveway.

#### Why?

Cars and kids don't mix. Young children have no fear of cars and are not easily seen by drivers. Nearly every month a toddler is killed after being reversed over in a driveway.

Kidsafe estimates that if these six features were in place in all Australian homes, they would help prevent more than half of all home injury deaths among children under five and thousands of children from the trauma of a hospital visit.

Families wanting more information on making their home safer for children can contact Kidsafe WA.



#### Kidsafe WA © 2005

Excerpts may be copied for educational purposes. Written permission is required to copy this fact sheet in its entirety.

For more information ☎ (08) 9340 8509

Child Safety Information Line ☎ 1800 802 244

Poisons Information Centre ☎ 13 11 26

[www.kidsafewa.com.au](http://www.kidsafewa.com.au)

The printing of this Fact Sheet is proudly supported by:

