

## FACT SHEET:

# bunk bed injuries



Every week in Queensland, six to eight children are treated in an emergency department for bunk bed-related injuries.<sup>1</sup>

## The risks

Bunk-bed injuries occur most commonly in children aged four to six, but are also frequent among one to three-year-olds and seven to nine-year-olds.<sup>1</sup>

The most common type of bunk-bed injury is a fall. Most falls are from the top bunk and are greater than one metre.<sup>1,2</sup>

Children are also injured by jumping or being pushed off bunk beds, hitting their heads or other body parts against the bed frame, being hit by another child falling off the bunk bed, and being caught between parts of a bunk bed.<sup>1,2</sup>

At least one in every 10 bunk bed injuries involve a ceiling fan.<sup>1</sup> Bunk bed injuries occur while children are sleeping (most common in five to nine-year-olds), or while playing (most common in one to three-year-olds).<sup>2</sup>

## Injuries<sup>1,2</sup>

### Bunk bed injuries can be fatal.

Broken arms and legs are common, as well as head injuries (minor and major cuts and bruises, as well as more serious head injuries such as concussion, skull fractures and traumatic brain injury), internal organ failure, and sprains/strains to the arms and legs.

## Prevention<sup>3</sup>

Bunk beds are unsafe for children under nine, and preferably should not be used by children under 12.

Only purchase a bunk bed that complies with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 4220:2003. If you are staying with children in accommodation while on holiday or travelling, avoid booking a room with a bunk bed or make sure the bunk bed complies with the Australian Standard. Don't allow children to play on bunk beds.

Avoid having a bunk bed in a room with a ceiling fan. If the room has a ceiling fan, make sure the bed is at least two metres from the ceiling fan.

Faults in bed construction can result in the bed collapsing, coming apart or safety rails falling off – so make sure it is assembled correctly and according to instructions.

Make sure the ladder and safety rails are well-secured to the bunk.

The top bunk area should have no gaps between 95mm and 230mm as this can be a head trap.

To prevent your child from rolling off, ensure the top of the safety rail is at least 160mm above the top of the mattress.

### Sources

1. McKenzie K, Scott D, Limbong J, & Li E, 2011, *Feasibility Of Using Health Data Sources To Inform Product Safety Surveillance In Queensland*, National Centre for Health Information Research and Training, Faculty of Health, Queensland University of Technology.
2. Barker R, Heiring C, Spinks D & Pitt R, 2008, Injury Bulletin no.103: *Injuries related to Bunk Bed use in Queensland*, Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit.
3. Office of Fair Trading, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (Qld), *Bunk Bed Safety*: [fairtrading.qld.gov.au/bunk-bed-safety.htm](http://fairtrading.qld.gov.au/bunk-bed-safety.htm)

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