

Open days at Kidsafe

You could be forgiven for thinking that Christmas had come early; there were children bouncing, painters painting, sausages sizzling and one Kidsafe house open for the public all weekend.

In a bid to save even more kids from hospital, Kidsafe house in Herston opened its doors over the last weekend in November and gave demonstrations on injury prevention and bicycle safety.



Lachlan Logan shows his stripes

As well as providing advice on the best ways to keep your children safe around the home, Kidsafe provided free child restraint checks to ensure that all the kids were seated safely for the holidays.

But the weekend wasn't all business; there was fun to be had by all — the young and the young at heart.

With the help of our friends from Spring-free Trampolines, visitors were literally jumping and bouncing for joy!

Our face painters created beautiful butterflies and ferocious lions, with child restraint installer Lachlan Logan getting into the festive spirit — the weekend was a roaring success!



Road trip—Bundaberg

In early December, Kidsafe CEO Susan Teerds and child restraint installer Lachlan Logan drove to Bundaberg to deliver free information sessions on the child restraint rules and free child restraint checks.

Across various locations in Bundaberg they answered questions and gave advice on the rules to parents, medical staff at the Bundaberg Base Hospital, grandparents and child carers. Other topics covered included general injury prevention around the home and how to prevent low-speed runovers.

Lachlan found that every restraint checked had a problem—from twisted straps to the adult seatbelt path through the back of the toddler seat being incorrectly fitted. The most common misinterpretation of the child restraint rules was to move a toddler into a booster seat too early. The older standard of boosters are weight rated from 14kg to 26kg. That means that your four-year-old must weigh a minimum of 14kg to move into the booster seat. However, most parents thought the rules were that when the child was four or when they had reached 14kg they could move into a booster — wrong! It is dangerous for a young child to be seated in a booster. They must be four years of age to move from the toddler seat — with some exceptions for heavy or very tall children.

Amazingly, there were many children not restrained at all! Susan and Lachlan were **stunned to see a baby being held on Mum's lap** on the front seat. And, when approached, the Mum declined information on child restraints.

CHOOSING TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is here, so before the man in the big red suit comes down your chimney make sure he is best advised on the possible dangers that lie in your child's Christmas stocking...

Parents should be vigilant to the risks that make the household a hazard this Christmas.

Babies and toddlers are at risk of choking or swallowing small toy parts as well as other small objects from the tree or in Christmas stockings such as jewellery, tree decorations, magnets, party favours, beads and batteries.

Small button or disc batteries, which can be found inside electronic Christmas cards, flashing Christmas jewellery, toys, games and watches, are particularly dangerous and have caused serious and potentially fatal internal damage when swallowed. If they get stuck they burn a hole through the tissue within an hour.

Kidsafe Queensland CEO Susan Teerds warned that there were a number of hazards to keep an eye out for this Christmas. She said that the small batteries often flew 'under the radar' and parents could be unaware of the effects of extended exposure to skin and consumption. Magnets were another hazard that parents are often unaware of.

"Magnets in toys and magnets generally pose a serious health risk," she said. "If a child does not choke on a single magnet, it will often pass through their system, but if they swallow multiple magnets the magnets will draw toward each other and tear through the lining of the gut causing perforation, bleeding, infection and possible death. Older children are also at risk of injury from magnetic jewellery such as magnetic nose piercings when the magnets lodge in the septum and need to be surgically removed."

Mrs Teerds recommended considering the size and material of Christmas ornaments — checking for parts that could come loose, detach or break. She also warned that lights or tinsel could become a strangulation hazard if they were longer than 30 centimetres.

Hot cars and kids don't mix

Queensland babies and small children at risk of injury or death within minutes of being left in a locked car this summer

With the arrival of the summer months, parents should be aware of the dangers of leaving children unsupervised and unattended inside parked vehicles.

A simple act of negligence results in RACQ rescuing up to 25 babies and young children each week from the risk of injury and even death. Temperatures inside vehicles rise dramatically in a matter of minutes.

Kidsafe Queensland executive officer Susan Teerds emphasised how quickly the interior of a car could become a hazardous environment.

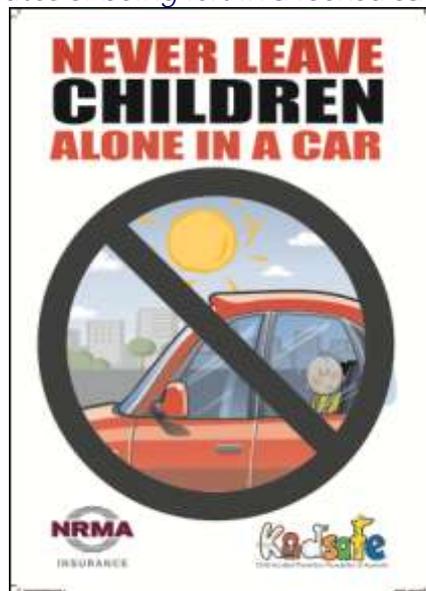
"In one RACQ test, the temperature inside a vehicle left in the sun rose from around 19°C to more than 30°C in just 1½ minutes, reaching 40°C within eight minutes and then rising to a maximum temperature of more than 60°C," she said.

"In some circumstances, temperatures inside cars can exceed 70°C."

The risk of injury is enormous in such cases, with 40°C enough to trigger symptoms of fluid loss, heat exhaustion, dehydration and heatstroke, with the effects occurring rapidly with younger people due to their smaller bodies, edging them closer to a life-threatening outcome.

Kidsafe Queensland promotes staying calm if a child is found locked in a vehicle.

"In these circumstances, it may help to provide some shade for the vehicle, such as umbrellas, and to cool the car using a hose, while calling emergency services and the



RACQ to break into the car," Mrs Teerds said. "If the situation is judged to be critical, it may be necessary to break in yourself, but this can only be achieved using a pick – where all the force of the impact is contained in one point. Breaking in yourself is a last resort – the key concern is the safety of the children."

Mrs Teerds said that a hot car scenario was not dependent on the season, colour of the car or whether it had tinted windows or a sunshade. She also said that even though emergency services and the RACQ responded with swiftness and urgency, the ultimate responsibility lay solely with the parents.

"The golden rule is simply to never leave children alone in a car – even for a few minutes," she said. "Besides the heat risk,

cars have cigarette lighters, gear levers and parking brakes that can be tempting playthings to a child.

"If you're going out in the car with your children, always plan your trip so that they will never be placed at risk.

"Remember to take water for everyone, and if you're getting out of the car along the way, take your children with you."

Queensland children have died when parents have left their cars unlocked in the driveway and children have climbed inside and locked themselves in – with the parents unaware they were in danger. Never leave your car unlocked when there is no adult in the vehicle.

And while hot car incidents directly affect the children, it may also result in legal issues for the parent or person accountable.

According to Queensland law, leaving a child under the age of 16 unsupervised inside a vehicle and walking more than three metres from the car may result in three years in prison.

While RACQ and Kidsafe Queensland wished to lower the threat posed to children, Mrs Teerds said pet-owners should also take notice.

"Even a dog left on the back of utility in the sun is not safe with touching surfaces hotter than 50°C, an uncomfortable and dangerous experience for any pet."

Mrs Teerds wants signs warning of the dangers of leaving kids in cars erected in supermarket carparks and other locations in Queensland. Contact Kidsafe for details about these signs.

Foam mats are safe for our children

Recent testing of foam play mats and toys for the chemical formamide has found no evidence that these products present any risk to children.

The ACCC and some state/territory consumer product safety agencies tested a total of 16 ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) foam products. Half of the products tested released no measurable amount of formamide, and, where formamide was measured, the amounts released were very small.

Based on the actual testing, it was concluded that a child would need to mouth for 20 minutes, or ingest, at least 4.17 square metres of typical foam play mat every day over their entire life to approach a level of exposure to formamide which might raise health concerns.

The potential exposure of children to formamide from these products was calculated and compared to the internationally recognised lowest observable adverse effect level cited in **Environment/Health Canada's Screening Assessment for the Challenge: Formamide.**

While most contact children have with these products is through their skin, the exposure estimate also considered a worst-case scenario, where children might mouth or ingest the foam.

Foam play mats and toys typically available in Australia do not expose children to unsafe amounts of formamide and these products are safe for their intended purpose.



Deadly toys creep back onto market

20,000 dangerous 'yo-yo balls' have been seized due to their strangulation risk after reappearing in the market despite their Australia-wide ban eight years ago.

Three yo-yo balls were discovered at a Coorparoo market stall and were traced to a wholesaler on the Gold Coast, which, upon inspection, revealed more than 19,000 yo-yo balls ready for distribution and information relating to the sale of a further 11,755 to 150 stores across Australia.

While yo-yo balls may look like a bit of harmless fun, they are actually extremely dangerous for children; the elasticised cord that produces the yo-yo effect can stretch to up to a metre in length, which means it can easily wind around a child's neck during play.

Parents are urged to use common sense when purchasing toys and choose age-appropriate toys. A rule of thumb is, the smaller the child, the larger the toy parts. Test the toys — pull at the wheels and other small parts to ensure they are secure.

Read the label and remember that, just because it is for sale, it doesn't mean it meets Australia's strict standards. Many importers either unwittingly or deliberately import dangerous or banned products.

Product recalls:

Phil & Ted's Dash stroller 2010. The user's finger may be caught in the stroller hinge while unfolding it, resulting in crushing and/or laceration. You can continue to use the stroller but contact www.philandted.com/support for a self-fit hinge cover kit.

Fantastic Furniture — Disney Fairies & Mojo High Sleepers. High sleeper bed with robe and desk. Inaccurate label positioning may lead to an incorrect mattress being used on the top bunk, resulting in a child rolling over the guard rail. Cease using and contact the store for a replacement label with instructions.

Costco Wholesale Australia P/L—Wooky Crayon Block Set. Stackable crayon block set of 50 pieces and giant colouring pad. Potential choking hazard for children under 3 years. Crayon blocks break into small pieces when dropped onto hard surfaces. Return the product to the Costco store for a refund.

This year NSW Fair Trading inspected 28,511 electrical items in 753 shops and found 783 articles did not comply with Australian standards. 117 varieties of non-compliant toys were found, as well as seven potentially dangerous Christmas-related products. Photographs of the products are on www.fairtrading.nsw.org.au

Stay safe this festive season

Once a year up goes the Christmas tree with decorations, but parents often overlook the risks these pose to babies and toddlers.

Consider the size and material of ornaments and whether they are small enough to become a choking hazard or have parts that can become loose or break. Remember that Christmas lights, beads and tinsel can become a strangulation hazard if longer than 30 centimetres.

Along with hazards inside the house, extra attention should be paid to avoiding accidents outside the house — in the backyard and at the playground or beach.

Swimming pools, playground equipment, barbecues and wildlife can be hazards for children, especially at this time of year when parents are often distracted by visitors.

Christmas is also a time where children often spend more time outside than indoors.

With four children under the age of five drowning in backyard pools each year in Queensland, it is essential parents closely supervise their children.

Spas, ponds, buckets of water, eskies and anywhere that collects a few centimetres of water can become a drowning or near-drowning danger.

Supervision, self-closing pool gates, knowing CPR, fencing off the pool area, ensuring there are no trees or structures for children

to climb to gain access to pools, and teaching children to swim are all important safety factors. Parents should also ensure their pool fence and gate meet regulatory requirements.

With children out in the water, also consider protection from the sun. This period in Queensland often means soaring temperatures and the ever-present risk of skin cancer. Excessive exposure to the sun in early life regularly equates to a greater potential to develop skin cancer later in life.

Although children find relief from the heat in the swimming pool, they still suffer from the effects of prolonged sun exposure.

Because of their small, developing bodies, they feel the effects of the heat far quicker than an adult. Their bodies are far less efficient in cooling down their core temperatures, thus inviting heat-related illnesses such as heat rash, sunburn, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Ensure a regular intake of fluids, keep the child out of the sun between 10am and 3pm and use proper sun protection— sunsuits, wide-brimmed hats and water-resistant sunscreen reapplied after every two hours, after swimming and sweating.

The risk of heat and burns in the backyard is not limited to exposure to the sun.

Barbecues contribute to the seven children who are admitted to emergency rooms and treated for burns each day in Queensland.



Children should not be allowed close to a barbecue because of the risk of touching it, or worse, igniting their clothing.

Trampolines are a popular Christmas gift, even though 11 children are taken to hospital each week with trampoline-related injuries. Place the trampoline on a level, soft surface — and not under overhanging trees. One child on the trampoline at a time, without shoes or jewellery, mitigates the risk of serious injury.

Choose a trampoline without springs or with pads to cover the springs, a net and supervise at all times.