

## fact sheet

### The Facts\*

Each year in Queensland around 36 000 (thirty-six thousand) children under the age of 15 present at hospitals as a result of a fall. Out of this phenomenal number, around 15 % are admitted – that's close to five and a half thousand children.

Falls are the major cause of hospital admission across all age groups of children and adults. While bumps and bruises are common in all age groups serious injury including head injuries do occur. As children move through different stages of development the site and reason for a fall changes.

### Fall Prevention

There are many things that can make a difference to help prevent falls in the home. These include:

- Choose non-slip surfaces on all floors, paths as well as baths and showers.
- Use non slip stickers in baths and showers.
- Rugs can be a tripping hazard so use a non-slip backing
- Pick up items off the floor e.g. toys, shoes and clothing left lying around
- For steps and stairs
  - adequate lighting, two way switch or night lights
  - vertical balustrading and sturdy rails
  - non-slip surface
  - opening gates at top and bottom that you don't have to step over
- Remove tripping hazards outside (hoses, garden tools etc)



Bath Stickers

### Balustrading and Windows

- Vertical balustrading is more difficult for children to climb so is a safer option than horizontal rails and balustrading (up to 100mm between bars)
- Do not leave objects easily accessible that children can use to climb on to access windows or high balconies
- Windows in children's bedrooms, or others with a long fall below them should have a restricted opening of 100mm to prevent children climbing or falling out of windows to the ground below.
- Make sure fly screens are secure. Children who put their weight on the screens can fall through.

### Bunk Beds

Each year about 4,000 Australian children need medical care because of bunk bed related injuries. About 400 of these children require hospital treatment, mostly for broken bones and concussion. Tragically, about one child dies every three or four years.\*\*

### Safe Use of Bunks

- Never allow a child under 6 years on the top bunk.
- Do not let children use bunk beds as a play area. Many injuries occur when children fall from the top bunk while playing.
- The bunk bed design shouldn't allow hanging points and there shouldn't be holes or gaps (75mm-230mm) that can trap heads, legs and arms.
- Never place a bunk near a window, and keep the bunk beds at least two metres away from a ceiling fan. (Ceiling fan guards are available, contact Kidsafe Qld for more information).
- Check ladders and guard rails are permanent and stable.
- Make sure ladders are easy to use even when sleepily getting out of bed in the dark.
- Check regularly for wear and tear always undertake repairs immediately.
- Before you buy, make sure the bunk bed has been tested to and complies with AS/NZS 4220.

### Playgrounds

Kidsafe advocates the following elements of good playgrounds

- A good safe design which conforms with Australian Standards
- For areas over 500mm in height, soft fall to a depth of 250mm be in place
- Separate active areas and quiet areas so children are not running through sand pits or the sand pit is not near the swings.
- Adequate supervision at all times.

Kidsafe QLD have a section on Playground Safety and resources are also available for purchase. See our website or contact us for more details.



### Falls in the 0-5 year age group

Children especially under the age of 12 months are top heavy. The size and weight of the head of a young child is not in proportion to the rest of his/her body. This causes the child to easily fall. The most common reasons for a fall in this age group are

- Nursery furniture (See Nursery Furniture Fact Sheet)
- Steps, stairs and balconies
- Play equipment

### Preventing fall injuries in this age group:

- Where possible use nursery furniture which complies with Australian Standards
- Always use the manufacturers instructions when assembling nursery furniture.
- Secure heavy pieces of furniture e.g. bookshelves, stove, TV.
- Always use a 5 point harness to restrain a child in a stroller or high chair and provide constant supervision
- When using a change table never leave the child and have everything close at hand
- Use gates at the top and bottom of stairs
- Baby walkers are not recommended as they can be unstable and enable a child to move quickly into danger areas e.g. near stairs.
- Provide a soft surface when children are learning to walk e.g. a carpet square or rug rather than hard floor boards or tiles.
- Keep sharp corners covered especially coffee tables with "corner bumpers"
- Always provide supervision on play equipment.



### Falls in the 6-14 year age group.

Children in this age group are most often injured during sport and leisure activities and on play equipment.

### Preventing fall injuries in this age group

- Helmets are essential at all times for bicycles, skateboards, rollers blades, scooters etc.
- Inspect bikes on a regular basis to ensure they are in good working order. Brakes are not worn down and are fitted correctly, the chain is not too loose and frequently oiled and tyres are not worn
- Wear protective sporting gear and adhere to the rules.
- Playground equipment over 500mm in height should be a soft fall surface of at least 250mm under equipment. See Playground Fact Sheets for more information.
- Trampolines can be fun but it is essential that padding covers the springs, strict rules (one child at a time) are adhered to and adult supervision is present. Consider enclosed trampolines.



### For more information

ACCC on [www.accc.gov.au](http://www.accc.gov.au)

Ministerial Council on Consumer affairs on

[www.consumer.gov.au](http://www.consumer.gov.au)

\* Data provided by QISU 2006

\*\* [www.choice.com.au](http://www.choice.com.au)

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For more information ☎ (07) 3854 1829

Email: [gld@kidsafe.org.au](mailto:gld@kidsafe.org.au)

Website: [www.kidsafeqld.com.au](http://www.kidsafeqld.com.au)

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