

Injury Prevention - Unintentional Injury Fact Sheet

- The purpose of Injury Prevention is to reduce the incidence and severity of injuries.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Unintentional Injuries are the leading cause of death for individuals in the United States for persons between the ages of 1 and 44.
- Older adults and young children experience higher rates of home injury or death than the general population.
- The most common cause of unintentional injuries can be categorized as 1) motor vehicles (including motorized sporting equipment such as scooters and four-wheelers); 2) falls; 3) poisonings; 4) bicycle and other wheel-related sports (including bikes, skateboards, roller blades, and other nonmotorized sporting equipment with wheels); 5) fires and burns; and 6) drownings.
- Approximately 50,000 children experience unintentional injuries annually that result in a permanent disability.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death for Americans 65 years and older. Each year, about 35-40% of adults 65 and older fall at least once.
- The Haddon Matrix (Injury Triangle) is composed of the host, agent, and environment. The three variables of each component of the triangle are the pre-event, event, and post-event factors.
- Primary prevention works to stop an injury from occurring, while secondary prevention works to reduce the seriousness of an injury when and if it does occur.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people from age 1 until about age 44.
- Falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injury among all age groups. More than half of the deaths caused by unintentional falls occur in the home.
- Estimates indicate that 4 million poisonings occur every year in the United States. Unintentional poisonings are second only to motor vehicle crashes as a cause of death due to intentional injury. Children younger than six are involved in more than 50% of the poisonings reports, but account for 2% of the fatalities. The nationwide toll-free Poison Control Center number is 1-800-222-1222.
- Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes. Bicycle helmets are 85-88% effective in lessening the seriousness of head and brain injuries, or preventing them altogether. A good partner in teaching bicycle safety is the local police department. Cyclist fatalities occur more frequently in urban areas.
- Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death to children ages 1 - 14. For each child that drowns, there are four more are hospitalized for near-drowning, and four are treated in hospital emergency rooms.
- The two groups most at risk for burns are children from the ages of newborn to about 5 years old and older adults. In the youngest group, scald injuries are the leading cause of accidental death in the home.
- Burns are categorized as 1) thermal (caused by radiation, flame contact, excessive heat from fire, steam, hot liquids, or hot objects); 2) chemical (caused by various acids, bases, and caustic chemicals); 3) electrical (caused by contact with alternating current, direct current, or lightning), and 4) light or radiation burns (from ultraviolet lights - including direct sunlight, nuclear sources, or intense light sources).
- Burns are categorized according to the severity of tissue damage, as follows: 1) superficial (first degree); 2) partial-thickness (second degree); and 3) full-thickness (third degree)