

Childhood Fall Prevention Fact Sheet

Virginia 2009

Falls are common and, at some stages of childhood, are almost everyday occurrences. However, falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury for children, accounting for more than one-fourth of nonfatal injury related hospitalizations.

Falls among children under 5, Virginia, 2009

- There was one fall-related injury death and 207 hospitalizations in 2009.
- Over 2.8 million dollars were billed for fall-related hospitalizations, for a median charge per episode of care of \$7,924.
- The average length of stay in the hospital was 2 days.
- Falls from one level to another were most common (26%), followed by falls from a bed (13%).
- Falls from playground equipment accounted for 7% of hospitalizations for 1-4 year olds.

PREVENTION TIPS:

- Never leave babies alone on any furniture, including beds, tables, sofas, high chairs or cribs and changing tables with the guardrails down — even if they have never rolled over before. Instead put babies on the floor or in a crib with secured guardrails.
- Never used baby walkers on wheels, as these allow children access to stairways and areas of the home that may result in a fall. Use stationary activity centers instead.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs, attaching the gate to the wall if possible. Avoid accordion gates with large openings, as a child's neck can get trapped in these openings.
- Move chairs, cribs, beds and other furniture away from windows. Children can quickly climb to window ledges or sills, and fall. Children can fall from windows opened as little as 5 inches.
- Install quick release window guards or stops to keep children from falling out of windows. Window screens are not designed to prevent falls. If you need to open windows, open them from the top—not the bottom.
- As babies get older and learn to sit and pull up to a standing position, lower the mattress in the crib. You should stop using the crib as soon as the top rails are less than 3/4 of the child's height.
- Modify slippery surfaces and remove hazards whenever possible.
- Secure area rugs and throw rugs by using nonskid backing.
- Select play equipment that is age appropriate for young children such as equipment that keeps children low to the ground.
- Always SECURE children into high chairs, strollers, swings and other items equipped with straps.
- Place baby carriers on the floor, not on top of a table or other furniture

RESOURCES:

CDC – Fall Prevention for Children www.cdc.gov/SafeChild/Falls/index.html

Safe Kids www.safekids.org

Prevent Injuries Virginia www.preventinjuriesva.com

Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalization for infants and children 0-14.

Injury and Violence Prevention Program
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
www.vahealth.org/injury