

The Wellness Family

Dr. Roller Keeps You Informed

The Price of a Fall

Most parents would love nothing more than to wrap their child in bubble-wrap before they head out the door to play. It's understandable; the statistics regarding childhood injuries and related deaths are disheartening, to say the least. According to the National Safety Council, unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death in children between the ages of 1 and 21.

Falls, in particular, are a common cause of childhood injury and death. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, each year there are approximately 140 deaths and over 3,000,000 emergency room visits due to fall-related injuries in children under the age of 15.

The Baby Can Roll Over!

This can be exciting news to a parent that just came home from work, but that will depend on how this discovery was made. The unfortunate truth is that most parents don't find out that their child can roll over until they leave them alone for two seconds on the changing table, the couch, or some other equally high surface.

The truth is that if the child doesn't cry for an extended period of time, or display signs of a concussion or other brain trauma, the fall will be considered just another milestone in a developing child's life. The trauma caused to his or her spine will remain undetected.

Your Toppling Toddler

Your little one has finally learned how to walk, but in the process he or she has probably spent more time on their bottom than on their feet. Due to a center of gravity issue learning to walk can cause a lot of falls. Of course, not every fall will cause a spinal injury, but as they accumulate, repetitive stress injuries will occur.

Your Adventurous Pre-Schooler

It may surprise you to learn that, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the majority of falls for this age group are out of a window. Young children are naturally curious and will explore their surroundings. A window left open just five inches poses a danger to a curious child, as falls from windows tend to be the most severe and/or fatal.

In addition, even a closed window can be dangerous if the child can get near it. A couch or sofa pushed up against a window can be a temptation to a little climber, and falling through glass will cause serious and often fatal injuries. In 2002, 113 children died from window falls and children ages 4 and under accounted for more than half of those deaths.

The Acrobatic Pre-Adolescent

While more than 80% of fall-related injuries among children ages 4 and under occur in the home, most



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mothers will not be surprised to learn that the majority of falls between the ages of 5 to 14 occur on school or public playground equipment.

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, in the last decade an estimated 150 children in this age group died, and each year more than 200,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for playground-related falls. The care for these injuries costs well over a billion dollars each year.

Who's at risk?

Statistically, all children who use playground equipment are at risk for injury. Yet the statistics prove that girls sustain slightly more injuries than boys.

- 55% of playground injuries are sustained by girls
- 45% of injuries are sustained by boys
- Children ages 5 to 9 are at the highest risk

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What can we do?

The fact is that we can't prevent most falls. So, it's important for parents to be able to recognize which of their children is more prone to falls and tumbles:

- The adventurous child that shows no fear.
- The clumsy child that frequently stumbles and trips.

Take a moment to educate the child about the possible danger and help them to recognize the need for caution or slow and steady steps. Trying to reign in a child is like trying to rope a cloud, but a moment of caution can possibly avoid a traumatic fall.

In Summary

Not all falls will result in a spinal trauma or injury; and we can't tell what damage has been done just by considering the force of the impact, the position in which the child fell, or even what part of the body they landed upon. Only your doctor of Chiropractic can properly evaluate for spinal trauma or subluxation and, while your Chiropractor will not always be able to detect the negative impact a fall may have had on your child's developing spine or nervous system, it's important to have your child evaluated after any fall.

It's best to have your son or daughter evaluated, even if no adjustment is necessary, than to avoid evaluation and have more serious problems develop in the future.

Resource Articles:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/playgr.htm>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/327.html>

http://www.ctsafekids.org/pdf_files/FallsFactSheet.pdf

For more information on this and similar Pediatric Chiropractic topics please visit the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association at www.icpa4kids.org

Playground Safety Checklist

- Make sure the surfaces around all playground equipment are made of impact absorbent materials.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from all playground equipment.
- Make sure that play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- Check for dangerous hardware, as in, open "S" hooks, protruding bolt ends, sharp points or edges.
- Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
- Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
- Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure their safe.

Dear Parent,

Dr. Roller is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care and along with that dedication comes an understanding that an informed parent makes wise decisions for their child. So, take a moment to speak with Dr. Roller today regarding any concerns you may have about your child or your family's overall health and wellness.

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