



accidents don't have to happen



Public Health
England

Safety issue ○

Delivering Accident Prevention at local level in the new public health system

Raise awareness ○

Part 2: Accident prevention in practice

Fact Sheet Home safety key issues

Education ○

Preventative measures ○

Partnership working ○

Reduced Risk of Injury

Delivering accident prevention at local level in the new public health system

Accident prevention in practice

Part 2 HS1

FACT SHEET: Home safety key issues

This section provides a summary of the scale of the problem of accidents at home, the costs, who is most at risk and when and where accidents happen. For more detailed information on causes and prevention of accidents visit www.rospe.com/homesafety.

Almost everyone has a home and is entitled to feel safe and secure in it. Unfortunately, it is also the place where accidents are most likely to happen.

Every day in the UK at least 13 people die as the result of an accident at home and just under 8,000 seek medical treatment.

In 2010–2011, 5,000 people in the UK died as the result of an accident at home, compared with 1,901 on the road.^{1,2,3}

It is estimated that more than 2 million people seek medical treatment at an accident and emergency department for treatment for a home accident.⁴

Why do so many people have accidents at home?

People spend more time at home than anywhere else, particularly the very young and the very old. The home is a complex place with many potential hazards in every room. Cookers, fires, stairs, windows, cleaning materials, medicines, alcohol, knives and hot water are just some of the items which can be hazardous, if not used correctly. Many hazardous activities are also carried out at home – climbing stairs, cooking, carrying hot items, ironing and DIY are just some of the activities, which can result in accidents and injuries.

How much do home accidents cost?

RoSPA recently commissioned research from the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL)⁵ to look into the cost of home accidents. Its findings were shocking: the total annual cost of home accident casualties who are treated for their injuries at hospital – around 2.7million people each year – is estimated to be £45.63billion (£45,630million), based on an average cost of £16,900 per victim.

This figure does not include the cost of home accident deaths, which number in excess of 5,000 every year, and for which the cost per fatality is estimated at £1.61million. And it does not include the cost of people who seek GP treatment after a home accident. So, in fact, the true cost to society of accidents at home is likely to be far higher.

Who is most at risk?

- Children under the age of five and people over 65 (particularly those over 75) are most likely to have an accident at home
- Home accidents are the most common cause of death in children over one year of age. Every year they leave many thousands permanently disabled or disfigured
- More than one million children under the age of 15 experience accidents in and around the home every year, for which they are taken to accident and emergency units. Many more are treated by GPs and by parents and carers
- The children most at risk from a home accident are the 0–4 years age group. Falls account for the majority of non-fatal accidents while the highest number of deaths are due to fire. Most of these accidents are preventable through increased awareness, improvements in the home environment and greater product safety
- More women than men over the age of 65 die as the result of an accident in the home
- Every year around 120 children under 14 die as the result of an accident in the home
- Boys have more accidents than girls
- Childhood injuries are closely linked with social deprivation. Children from poorer backgrounds are five times more likely to die as a result of an accident than children from better off families – and the gap is widening⁶

- Those over 65 years of age are the other group most at risk, suffering both the highest mortality rate and the most severe injuries. An estimated 500,000 people aged over 65 attend accident and emergency departments as the result of a home accident each year⁶
- The majority of accidents in the older age groups involve females rather than males
- Many of the fatal and non-fatal accidents to older people are attributable wholly or in part to frailty and failing health. This can lead to failure or slowness to see and avoid risks. By drawing the attention of older people and their carers to danger spots and unsafe habits then accidents can be reduced.

What type of accidents happen?

- Falls are the most common accidents, which can cause serious injury at any time of life. 55% of accidental injuries in the home involve falls. Almost three-quarters of falls among the 65-and-over age group result in arm, leg and shoulder injuries. Older people are also more likely to injure more than one part of their body, with 25% of falls causing injury to more than one part of the body, compared to an average 16% among all age groups. One in every five falls among women aged 55 and over results in a fracture or fractures requiring hospital treatment.
- Approximately 1,500 people aged over 75 die annually as the result of a fall. Although most falls do not result in a serious injury, being unable to get up exposes the faller to the risk of hypothermia and pressure sores
- Around 25,000 under-5s attend A&E departments each year after being accidentally poisoned
- 26,000 under-5s are burnt or scalded in the home every year. A hot drink can still scald a small child up to 15 minutes after it is made

Where do accidents happen?

- More accidents happen in the lounge/living room than anywhere else in the home.
- Every year more than 4,200 children are involved in falls on the stairs and 4,000 children under the age of 15 are injured falling from windows
- The most serious accidents involving older people usually happen on the stairs or in the kitchen. The bedroom and the living room are the most common locations for accidents in general
- The largest proportion of accidents are falls from stairs or steps with over 60% of deaths resulting from accidents on stairs. 15% of falls are from a chair or out of bed (on two levels) and a similar number are caused by a slip or trip on the same level, e.g. falling over a mat or a rug.

When do accidents happen?

- Most accidents happen between late afternoon and early evening, in the summer, during school holidays and at weekends
- Factors such as stress, death in the family, chronic illness, homelessness or moving home increase the likelihood of the child having an accident
- Some happen when the usual routine is changed or when people are in a hurry
- Distractions and inadequate supervision are often the cause of accidents
- Poor housing and overcrowded conditions lead to an increased numbers of accidents.
- Some accidents are caused by lack of familiarity with surroundings, for example, when visiting friends or relatives, or in holiday accommodation.

Preventing accidents in the home

“A safe, secure and sustainable environment is a prerequisite for a healthy nation.”⁵

A combination of factors is required:

Environment

Improvement in planning and design results in safer homes and leisure areas. Adaptations such as fireguards and safety gates help to make the home environment safer.

Education

This involves increasing the awareness of the risk of accidents in a variety of settings and providing information on ways of minimising these risks.

Empowerment

Local consultation and community involvement can generate a strong sense of commitment and ownership. Accident prevention initiatives, which have been influenced by the community, are more likely to reflect local need and therefore encourage greater commitment.

Enforcement

There is legislation which relates to child safety. These regulations ensure that the products we buy meet a reasonable level of safety performance and that new dwellings meet an acceptable level of safety.

References

Combined data from:

1. Office for National Statistics: Mortality Statistics: Deaths Registered in 2011 (Series DR), table 7. London: ONS, 2012. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-277727> (accessed May 2013).
2. General Register Office for Scotland: Vital Events Reference Tables 2011, table 6.2. Edinburgh: GROS, 2012. <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files2/stats/ve-reftables-2011/ve-2011-t6.2.pdf> (accessed May 2013).
3. Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Registrar General Northern Ireland Annual Report 2011, table 6.2. Belfast: DFP, 2012. <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp100.htm> (accessed May 2013).
4. Department of Health. Our healthier nation: a contract for health. Consultation Paper London: Stationery Office, 1998. 94pp.
5. Transport Research Laboratory. Re-evaluation of home accidents (report PPR 483). Bracknell: IHS, 2010. <http://www.rospa.com/homesafety/Info/re-evaluation.pdf> (accessed May 2013).
6. Department for Trade and Industry. 24th (final) report of the Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System: 2000, 2001 and 2002 data. London: DTI, 2003. http://www.hassandlass.org.uk/reports/2000_2002.pdf (accessed May 2013).

RoSPA Headquarters:

28 Calthorpe Road,
Edgbaston,
Birmingham B15 1RP

Telephone: +44 (0)121 248 2000

Fax: +44 (0)121 248 2001

Registered Charity No. 207823

VAT Registration No. 655 131649

www.rospace.com

© The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents



accidents don't have to happen



Public Health
England