



# **Keeping Our Youngest Children Safe “What If”**

**Most Common Early Childhood Injuries  
and How to Prevent Them**



# Keeping Our Youngest Children Safe: “What If”

## What If? Campaign

***What if your child wants to walk to school alone for the first time?***

***What if your phone rings when the baby's in the bathtub?***

***What if your toddler thinks Grandma's medication is candy?***

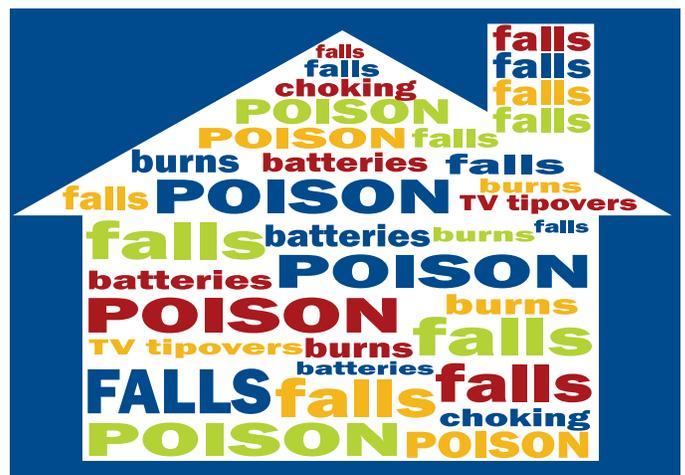
These are the kinds of real-life scenarios parents and caregivers grapple with every day – and the kind that Children's Services Council's countywide child safety campaign is tackling. Accidental injuries are the number one killer of children. With young children, injury may occur due to a momentary lapse of a watchful eye or something seemingly harmless that can hurt a child. The estimated 71,047 children in the county<sup>1</sup> from birth to age 5 are at particular risk. See more at: [www.WhatIfPBC.org](http://www.WhatIfPBC.org)

## Working with Our Community

Children's Services Council works with Safe Kids Palm Beach County and its coalition partner agencies representing law enforcement, fire rescue and other local organizations to increase awareness about childhood injuries and implement a range of prevention activities and interventions to keep kids safe. We have provided van emergency alarms to child care centers, door alarms to parents in homes with pools, supported car seat giveaways and numerous safety events.

## Important Links to Safety Information

1. Drowning Prevention Coalition [www.pbcgov.com/drowningprevention](http://www.pbcgov.com/drowningprevention)
2. Safe Kids Palm Beach County [www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids](http://www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids)
3. Safe Kids Worldwide [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
4. Palm Beach County Counts – injury data for Palm Beach County [www.pbccounts.org](http://www.pbccounts.org)
5. Kids Health [www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe)



## Leading Injuries in Early Childhood

### Why do Young Children Visit the Emergency Room?

The top three reasons young children visit the emergency room shown below represent 62% of all ER visits in Palm Beach County and 65% in the state.<sup>2</sup> Because of their age, many young children are injured in the home.

#### Top Three Reasons for Visits to the Emergency Room, Children Birth to 4

Palm Beach County	Florida
Falls _____ (3,234)	Falls _____ (50,860)
Struck by, Against ____ (1,008)	Struck by, Against ____ (17,983)
Bites & Stings _____ (492)	Bites & Stings _____ (11,044)

### Why are Young Children Hospitalized?

The top two injuries that require hospitalization of young children in the county, and the state, are falls and poisoning. The third in the county is drowning, and in the state is burns or scalds. These injuries represent 63% of all hospitalizations of young children in the county and 57% in the state.<sup>3</sup>

#### Top Three Non-Fatal Injuries Requiring Hospitalization, Children Birth to 4

Palm Beach County	Florida
Falls _____ (116)	Falls _____ (913)
Poisoning _____ (31)	Poisoning _____ (417)
Drowning _____ (21)	Burns and Scalds _____ (195)

### What are the Leading Causes of Injury Deaths of Young Children?

The main cause of injury deaths in Palm Beach County and the state for children **under age 1 is suffocation**. All of the deaths in 2012 of children under age 1 in Palm Beach County were due to suffocation, and 86% of deaths statewide.<sup>4</sup> The main cause of injury death in the county and state of children ages 1 to 4 is drowning. **Drowning deaths represent all the deaths ages 1 to 4 in the county**, and 62% of deaths of children statewide. Deaths of children from birth to 4 in Palm Beach County declined from 16 in 2011 to 9 in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

#### Leading Causes of Injury Death of Young Children Palm Beach County/Florida

Infants under Age 1	Children Ages 1-4
Suffocation (4 PBC, 84 FL)	Drowning (5 PBC, 56 FL)
Drowning (0 PBC, 8 FL)	Motor Vehicle Traffic (0 PBC, 12 FL)
Motor Vehicle Traffic (0 PBC, 4 FL)	Suffocation (0 PBC, 6 FL)



## In and Around the Home

For young children, serious hazards in the home can lead to severe injury or death.

### Suffocation: the Main Cause of Infant Death

Four children under age 1 died due to suffocation in Palm Beach County in 2012, and 11 in 2011. Many of these deaths were due to co-sleeping, pillows, toys or bedding. The risk of infant death is 40 times higher when the child is sleeping with an adult.<sup>6</sup>

#### What to do

- Make sure the crib, bassinet or playpen has a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet. If the crib has a side that drops down, or if a can of soda fits between the slats, it is unsafe.
- Lay your baby on his/her back to go to bed.
- Avoid co-sleeping. If you want to be near your baby, put the crib or bassinet in your room.<sup>6</sup>

### Falls: the Main Cause of Emergency Room Visits and Hospitalizations

Falls represent the main cause of ER visits (over 50,000 in Florida, 3,234 in Palm Beach County) and hospitalizations (913 in Florida, 116 in Palm Beach County) for young children birth to age 4 in 2012. Falls are likely to occur in the home.

#### What to do

- Move furniture and toys away from windows. Keep windows locked and closed unless in use.
- Properly install window guards to prevent unintentional window falls.
- Keep babies strapped in when using high chairs, infant carriers, swings or strollers.

### Ingestion: Button Batteries

- There has been a dramatic rise in the number of children who have suffered major injuries or died from ingesting button batteries.
- Once a child swallows a button battery, there's a ticking clock to get medical attention. A child could suffer severe burns to the esophagus within just two hours.<sup>6</sup>

#### What to do

- Keep loose batteries locked away and place a piece of duct tape over devices to prevent small children from accessing the battery – especially remote controls.
- If you suspect your child has ingested a battery, go to the hospital immediately. Don't induce vomiting or have your child eat or drink anything.

**The risk of infant death is 40 times higher when the child is sleeping with an adult.**



## In and Around the Home

### Poisoning – Parents and Grandparents Beware

Poisonings are the second leading cause of hospitalizations in Florida and Palm Beach County.<sup>3</sup>

- Nine out of 10 poisonings occur in the home. In 2012 alone, 4,105 children under the age of 5 in Florida were treated in ERs for poisoning.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly one in three medication poisonings that resulted in ER visits were from kids getting into their grandparents' medication.<sup>6</sup>

#### What to do

- Put medicines, including vitamins, up and away and out of children's sight.

### Burns and Scalds

- Palm Beach County had 174 emergency room visits for children under 5, and 17 children under 5 were hospitalized after being burned by a hot object in 2012.
- Scald burns, caused by hot liquids or steam, are more common types of burn-related injuries among young children. Tap water burns most often occur in the bathroom and tend to be more severe and cover a larger portion of the body than other scald burns.<sup>6</sup>

#### What to do

- Check the water with your wrist or elbow before giving your baby a bath.
- Use the back burner of your stove and turn pot handles away from the edge.

### Being Struck: Second Leading Cause of Emergency Room Visits

This category is one of the main reasons young children go to the emergency room. It includes being struck by a person, falling object, furniture, stationary object or by a thrown object.

### TV Tip-overs

- Older, heavier televisions are being moved from living rooms and family rooms to dressers and stands in bedrooms. TV tip-over-related injuries increased 31% from 2000 to 2010.

#### What to do

- Assess the stability of the TVs in your home.
- Mount flat-screen TVs to the wall to prevent them from toppling off stands.

**Nearly one in three medication poisonings that resulted in ER visits were from kids getting into their grandparents' medication.**



## In and Around Water

### Drowning – the Leading Cause of Death of Children Ages 1 to 4

- In 2012, 64 children from birth to 4 drowned in Florida, including five in Palm Beach County.<sup>4</sup>
- 21 children from birth to 4 in Palm Beach County were hospitalized due to near drowning or submersion, and 166 in Florida in 2012.<sup>3</sup>
- Children ages 1-4 had the highest rate of drowning and non-fatal drowning hospitalizations. Florida led the country in drowning deaths of children ages 1-4 in 2011. Sixty-six percent of drowning victims under 5 drowned in a **swimming pool**, 12% in **open water** and 6% in a **bathtub**.<sup>5</sup>
- Drowning can happen very quickly and in less than 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) of water. Parents and caregivers must be vigilant around filled bathtubs, swimming pools, wading pools, hot tubs, and even buckets of water and sinks.<sup>6</sup>

### **What to do – Use Layers of Protection!**

- **Supervision:** The first and most crucial layer of protection: someone who is always actively watching when a child is in the pool. Having a “Water Watcher,” a sober, undistracted adult assigned specifically to watch the pool area for 15 minutes at a time is recommended.
- **Barriers:** A child should never be able to enter the pool area unaccompanied by an adult guardian. Use isolation pool fencing, door latches from inside the house and outdoor screen areas and alarms on all doors and windows leading to the pool.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** There is a small, precious window of time in which resuscitation may occur, but only if someone knows what to do. Even if you’re not a parent, it’s important to learn CPR.  
[www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/drowningprevention/cpr.htm](http://www.co.palm-beach.fl.us/drowningprevention/cpr.htm)

### **What to do – Bathroom**

- Never leave a baby unattended in the bath. If you must answer the telephone or door, don’t rely on a sibling to watch the baby; wrap your baby in a towel and bring him or her with you.
- Make sure you bring all bath items needed into the bathroom so you are not tempted to leave the baby alone, even for a second, if something is forgotten.
- Never leave a bathtub, bucket, or other container filled with any amount of water or other liquid unattended.
- Never use a bathtub seat or supporting ring without constant adult supervision. The seat can overturn or a baby may slip out into the water.
- Install a toilet-lid locking device and keep bathroom doors closed.<sup>6</sup>



## In and Around Neighborhoods

### Bites and Stings

Luckily most bites and stings are not life threatening. However, this is the third most frequent reason for emergency room visits for young children (0-4) in Palm Beach County and the state.<sup>2</sup> Some life-threatening symptoms requiring emergency treatment may be swelling of the face, difficulty swallowing or speaking, chest tightness or difficulty breathing, dizziness or fainting.<sup>6</sup>

#### **What to do**

- If there are signs of a severe reaction, call 911. If the child has an injectable EpiPen (Epinephrine), it should be given.
- If there are no signs of a severe reaction: remove the stinger as soon as possible, wash the area with soap and water, apply ice or a cool cloth to the area to relieve pain and swelling.<sup>6</sup>

### Playground

Falls are the most common type of playground injury, at more than 75%. Lack of, or improper, supervision is associated with about 45% of playground-related injuries.

#### **What to do**

- Take your kids to playgrounds with shock-absorbing surfaces such as rubber, synthetic turf, sand, pea gravel, wood chips or mulch to cushion falls.
- Remove necklaces, purses, scarves or clothing with drawstrings that can get caught on equipment and pose a strangulation hazard.<sup>6</sup>

### On the Walk and the Ride

- Tell kids to look left, right and left again when crossing the street. Teach them to never run or dart out into the street or cross between parked cars.
- Never let your child cross the street alone until at least the age of 10.
- Teach kids to put down their phones and remove earphones while crossing the street.
- Florida law requires a bicycle rider under 16 years of age to wear a helmet that meets federal safety standards. (F.S. 316.2065)
- Teach kids to ride on the right side of the road with traffic, not against.



## In and Around Cars

### Motor Vehicle Injuries: Second Leading Cause of Death of Children Ages 1 to 4

- Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of preventable deaths and injuries to children in the United States.
- In 2012, 16 children in Florida ages birth to 4 died due to motor vehicle injuries.<sup>2</sup>
- Correctly used, child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71%.
- Seventy-three percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly.
- Learn how to install your car seat for free. Safe Kids Palm Beach County hosts car seat inspection events across the county where certified technicians can help make sure your car seat is properly installed, and teach you how to do it yourself. Find a Safe Kids car seat checkup event near you. For those in need of a seat, one may be available for a \$25 donation [www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids](http://www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids).
- Check your car seat. If you are having even the slightest trouble, questions or concerns, a certified child passenger safety technician will be able to help or double check your work.

### Auto Safety/Safety Seats/Booster Seat Laws

- All 50 states require child safety seats for infants and children fitting specific criteria.
- Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico require booster seats or other appropriate devices for children who have outgrown their child safety seats but are still too small to use an adult seat belt safely.
- The only states lacking booster seat laws are Florida and South Dakota.
- In 2013, the Florida legislature made texting while driving illegal in Florida.

### What to do

- Use a car seat for children even if you are just going down the street.
- Make sure all car and booster seats you use are based on your child's age and size, are crash-tested and federally approved and are installed correctly.
- Keep children in the back seat, at least through age 12. Air bags can be very dangerous to children who are not properly restrained. Never place a rear-facing child safety seat in front of an airbag.
- Expectant parents should buy an infant car seat before having the baby so they are ready to bring their new addition home safely.
- Replace a car seat if the vehicle has been in a moderate to severe crash to ensure a continued high level of protection (FLHSMV & Florida Department of Transportation recommendations, November 20, 2013). See Child Restraint Re-Use After Minor Crashes:

[www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/childps/ChildRestraints/ReUse/RestraintReUse.htm](http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/childps/ChildRestraints/ReUse/RestraintReUse.htm)



## In and Around Cars

### Other Car Hazards – Heatstroke Prevention

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children. The temperature inside your car can rise 20 degrees and cause heatstroke **in just 10 minutes**.

#### **What to do**

- Never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute.
- Make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- Create reminders by putting something that you will need at your final destination in the backseat of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cell phone. Remember you may be more forgetful if you're not following your normal routine.
- If you see a child alone in a car, call 911.

### Driveway Safety

- Babies and toddlers are hard to see. Take a few seconds to walk all the way around your parked car to check for kids near the car, or on bikes nearby, before you get in the car.
- When checking for kids around your vehicle, see if anything that could attract a child, such as a pet, bike or toy, is under or behind your vehicle.
- Back into parking spaces when possible. <sup>6</sup>

**“Child safety seats can be extremely effective. When correctly installed and used, they reduce the risk of death by 70% for infants and by 47% to 54% for toddlers (aged 1–4 years) and reduce the need for hospitalization by 69% for children aged 4 years and younger.”**

**American Journal of Preventive Medicine - Volume 21**





**For more information, please visit:  
WHATIFPBC.ORG**

### **References**

1. American Community Survey 2011, 1 year estimates, U. S. Census Bureau.
2. Profile of Emergency Room Visits Palm Beach County Residents, 2012, Florida Department of Health.
3. Profile of Non-Fatal Injury Hospitalizations Palm Beach County Residents, 2012, Florida Department of Health.
4. Profile of Fatal Injuries, Palm Beach County Residents, 2012, Florida Department of Health.
5. Florida Department of Health, Injury Prevention Program "Florida Injury Facts Drowning."
6. Safe Kids Worldwide.

---

## Numbers to Call – Information at a Glance

**Parents: copy this page and fill out for babysitters, caregivers  
and others every time you are away from home**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_’S Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_’S Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Our Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Where We Are Today: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

When We Will Be Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Police, Fire/Rescue: **911**

Nearest Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_

24-Hour Poison Control: **1-800-222-1222**



## Who We Are

Children's Services Council, a special district created by Palm Beach County voters, provides leadership, funding, services and research on behalf of the county's children so they grow up healthy, safe and strong.

## How We Work

To make the biggest impact possible, we focus on prenatal care and early childhood development so more Palm Beach County children are born healthy, are safe from abuse and neglect, are ready to learn when they enter school and have access to quality afterschool programming.

To reach these goals we fund local nonprofit and other agencies, which provide proven, high-quality services to our county's children and their families.

## How You Benefit

Because of the wise investment Palm Beach County residents make in Children's Services Council, our children are given the fundamental tools for success early in life, making them much more likely to:

- Reach vital growth and developmental milestones
- Graduate from high school
- Become productive members of society.

This does more than save us all money. It builds the foundation for a strong, safe community we are proud to live in.

[www.cscpb.org](http://www.cscpb.org)



Safe Kids Palm Beach County is a community based program that offers safety education and materials to families to decrease accidental injuries in children from birth to 14 years of age. We offer educational materials for all injury mechanisms including drowning prevention, home safety, pedestrian safety, bicycle safety and child passenger safety. Safe Kids Palm Beach County is funded by the Children's Services Council Palm Beach County and led by Community Partnership Group. [www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids](http://www.cp-cto.org/Safe-Kids)