

Unintentional Injuries

Are You and Your Family at Risk?

Unintentional injuries are a major health problem in the U.S. They can occur at home, at work and in the community. Falls, sports-related incidents, drowning, fires and motor vehicle crashes are major causes of such injuries.

Unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for people 1 to 44 years old. Overall, unintentional injuries account for approximately 120,000 deaths annually. Injuries also account for one in three emergency department visits, one in every 10 hospital admissions and one out of every six hospital days.

Unintentional Injuries Are Not Accidents

Accidents are unpredictable and unpreventable events causing injury. Unintentional injuries, in contrast, are predictable and preventable because they are affected by elements we have control over. These elements include lifestyle choices such as wearing seatbelts or bicycle helmets, aspects of home or community environments such as keeping stairs well-lit and public safety policies such as road safety regulations. You can do a lot to prevent unintentional injury to yourself and your family.



Tips for Preventing Unintentional Injuries

The following tips highlight a few ways to enhance safety:

- Choose safety and model prevention to your children.
- Stay functionally fit with regular exercise.
- Use safety helmets and other protective sports equipment.
- Walk dogs on leashes. Teach children how to interact safely with dogs.
- Never leave food cooking on stove tops or leave small children in baths unattended.
- Enhance the safety of your home environment.
- Remove trip hazards, such as loose rugs or furniture in pathways from your home.
- Provide adequate lighting, particularly on stairs, outdoor steps and walks, and near appliances.
- Install and maintain smoke detectors.
- Set hot water heaters at 120°F to prevent scalding.
- Keep medicines, matches and household chemicals in child-resistant containers and store out of reach of children.
- Practice motor vehicle safety.
- Select new and used vehicles with good safety features and records.
- Buckle up each and every time.
- Place children in the back seat in age-appropriate child safety seats.
- Drive defensively and obey traffic safety laws.

For more information on preventing all types of unintentional injuries, visit the website of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at: cdc.gov/injury



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This information is provided by Orlando Health's Lifestyle Medicine Initiative.
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