



## Safety: Windows & Lead

### 5,000 kids a year hurt in falls from windows

The number of children treated in U.S. emergency departments for falls from windows approached 100,000 between 1990 and 2008, says a study in the medical journal *Pediatrics*. The research shows that the number of injuries declined during the first decade of the study period, but has since plateaued.

"We still are seeing over 5,000 children a year treated in hospital emergency departments across the country for injuries related to window falls," said Dr. Gary A. Smith, study author and director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. "That's 14 children a day."

Researchers studied data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System maintained by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The group monitors injuries involving consumer products treated in emergency departments nationwide.

The injury rate was highest at age 2.

"These are kids who don't recognize danger - they're curious, they want to explore and when they see an open window, they are going to investigate," Smith said. "Kids at that age tend to be top heavy. Their center of gravity is up near their chest and so as they lean out of the window to see what's going on, they'll topple."

While a few children did fall from a third story or higher, many more fell from a first- or second-story window.

"What we're finding is that most of these aren't these really high-rise buildings," Smith added. "These are just as often homes or apartments that aren't high-rise, where children live. This is a problem that extends to small towns and even rural areas across the country."



He reinforces the message that a screen does not offer protection and should give parents no feeling of comfort.

Smith, who is a pediatric emergency medicine physician, tweeted advice for parents ([thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/22/5000-kids-a-year-hurt-in-falls-from-windows/](http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/22/5000-kids-a-year-hurt-in-falls-from-windows/)) on Twitter.

The study points out that great reductions were seen in New York and Boston after programs educating parents specifically and the community in general were implemented there to combat the problem. Window guards were also made available. In New York City, window guards became mandatory in apartments where young children live.



### Housing source of dangerous exposure to lead

Childhood lead poisoning remains a major environmental health problem in the United States. The EPA observes National Lead Poisoning

Prevention Week, October 23-29, 2011, to focus on the importance of educating parents and children about the dangerous health effects

of lead exposure, especially lead-paint hazards in housing.

#### Paint: Greatest source of exposure

A child's environment is full of lead. Children are exposed to lead from different sources (such as paint, gasoline, solder, and consumer products) and through different pathways (such as air, food, water, dust, and soil). Nevertheless, lead-based paint is the most widespread and dangerous high-dose source of lead exposure for young children. Lead poisoning can affect nearly every system in the body. If not detected early, children with high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer from:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Behavior and learning problems, such as hyperactivity
- Slowed growth
- Hearing problems
- Headaches

Because lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized.

#### Focus: Housing

Dramatic reductions in Blood Lead Levels (BLLs) of U.S. children during 1970 - 1990 were attributed to population-based primary prevention policies (such as the banning of lead in gasoline) in >>

conjunction with improved lead screening and identification of children with elevated BLLs. Estimates based on 1999 - 2000 nationally representative data suggest that about 2.2 percent of children aged 1-5 years (about 434,000 children) have elevated BLLs.

Research suggests that these elevated BLLs result primarily from exposure to lead in non-intact paint, interior settled dust, and exterior soil and dust in and around older deteriorating housing. Renovation in older housing also creates substantial lead hazards unless dust is contained and the areas are thoroughly cleaned. Although many sources of lead exposure exist for children, the recommendations in the 2004 "Pre-

venting Lead Exposure in Children" report by CDC specifically focused on preventing childhood exposure to lead-based paint hazards in and around housing.

#### **EPA's renovation, repair and painting rule**

The focus was still on housing when the EPA's Lead-Based Paint Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) Rule took effect in April 2010. It is a federal regulatory program covering anyone who disturbs painted surfaces where lead may be present.

Specifically, any contractor, including renovators, electricians, HVAC specialists, plumbers, painters and maintenance staff, who disrupts more than six-square-feet of lead

paint in pre-1978 homes, schools, day care centers and other places where children spend time, must be certified.

Companies are certified, individuals must be trained in lead-safe work practices, and training providers must be accredited by EPA.

#### **Alert consumers**

EPA has launched an education program to alert consumers that unqualified workers could spread lead paint dust in housing built before 1978 even in doing a small job.

Three simple steps help parents protect their children:

- **Get Your Home Tested.** Ask for a lead inspection before you buy a

home built before 1978.

- **Get Your Child Tested.** Ask your doctor to test your young children for lead even if they seem healthy.
- **Get the Facts.** More information about preventing childhood lead poisoning is available at [www.leadfreekids.org](http://www.leadfreekids.org).

To protect tenants and family members when renovations take place, landlords, homeowners and homebuyers are directed to locate a contractor who is Lead-Safe Certified by visiting [epa.gov/getleadsafe](http://epa.gov/getleadsafe) or calling 800-424-LEAD.

To learn more about supporting the consumer education effort, visit [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) and click on Lead or [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/). ■