



# Unintentional injury



## Why is it important?

Unintentional injuries are a leading cause of death, ill-health and disability in children and young people. In 2014/15, about one in eight of emergency hospital admissions and 8% of deaths of children in Scotland were the result of unintentional injuries. However, the majority of unintentional injuries do not result in death or hospital admission but are treated by GPs, A&E departments, or by parents/carers.

Unintentional injuries are the result of events that, usually, can be prevented. They can occur in the home, at school, on the road and during play. Children under five years of age are at most risk from injuries in the home.

## Current situation

In 2014/15 in Glasgow, 10 per 1,000 children (under 15 years old) were admitted to hospital following an unintentional injury. However, there are differences between neighbourhoods. The rate of children under 15 admitted to hospital after an unintentional injury varies between 5.5 per 1,000 children and 14.2 per 1,000 children.

## Are there inequalities to consider?

Children living in a low-income household and/or in temporary, rented or social housing are at greater risk. Boys and children living in the most deprived areas are more likely to be admitted to hospital as a result of an unintentional injury.

Children living in disadvantaged areas can face increased risks from the built environment, e.g. dense housing, proximity to fast-moving traffic, high levels of on-street parking, and limited recreational facilities so may use the roads as a place to play and socialise.

NICE (2013): [Evidence Update 29 – Strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among children and young people aged under 15.](#)

## Challenges and solutions

- Parenting interventions are effective in reducing the risk of unintentional injury in children and can improve home safety.
- Home safety interventions, especially when safety equipment (e.g. smoke alarms, thermostatic mixer valves, window restrictors, carbon monoxide alarms) is supplied and fitted, are effective in improving safety practices and may reduce injury rates. (Source: Kendrick et al (2012) Home safety education and provision of safety equipment for injury prevention. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2012, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD005014.)
- Home safety education can improve safety knowledge but may not reduce injuries.
- NICE recommends that households where children are considered to be at greatest risk should be offered a structured home assessment followed by advice and support, tailored to their individual circumstances, to reduce risk.
- Reduced-speed zones around schools and playgrounds lower vehicle speeds. In general, 20 mph limits and zones prevent and reduce the severity of injuries.

## Examples of positive action

1. [The “Not for Play” campaign](#) aimed to tackle the growing number of liquid laundry capsule ingestion injuries to children in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Board area. The campaign was initiated when a growing number of children, averaging

the age of 18 months, were being brought to the emergency department at the Royal Hospital for Children (Yorkhill) after consuming liquid laundry capsules. These products, used in washing machines or dishwashers, are small brightly coloured capsules containing a concentrated amount of liquid detergent which, if ingested, can cause serious injury.

2. [Straight Off, Straight Away](#) is a campaign in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to raise awareness of hair straightener burns to children. The campaign urges parents and carers to turn straighteners 'Straight Off', and put them 'Straight Away'. As hair straighteners can reach temperatures up to 230°C, they can cause serious burns if touched.

3. RoSPA Scotland: [Scotland's Big Red Book of Accident Prevention](#).

## Links to other issues

[Active travel to school](#)

## Links to other resources

[RoSPA Scotland](#)

Hayes, M., Kendrick, D., Deave, T. (2014): [Injury Prevention Briefing. Prevention of unintentional injuries to the under-fives: a guide for practitioners](#). [endorsed by NICE]

Hayes, M., Kendrick, D. (2016): [A guide for commissioners of child health services on preventing unintentional injuries among the under-fives](#).

NICE [website]: [Unintentional injuries among under-15s pathway](#)

NICE (2016): [Preventing unintentional injury in under 15s](#) [QS107]

Public Health England (2014):

- i) [Reducing unintentional injuries on the roads among children and young people under 25 years](#).
- ii) [Reducing unintentional injuries in and around the home among children under five years](#).

NICE (2013): [Evidence Update 29 – Strategies to prevent unintentional injuries among children and young people aged under 15](#).

NICE (2010):

- i) [Unintentional injuries: prevention strategies for under 15s \[PH29\]](#)
- ii) [Unintentional injuries in the home: interventions for under 15s \[PH30\]](#)
- iii) [Unintentional injuries on the road: interventions for under 15s \[PH31\]](#)

Scott, E., Sigerson, D., Woodman, K. (2012): [Evidence Summary: Public health interventions to prevent unintentional injuries among the under 15s](#). Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland.