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## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### Safety pitfalls: Stairs are a leading cause of injury for small children

Stair-climbing is part of everyday life in many homes and public places. Caregivers need to be vigilant to make sure children are not hurt while going up and down stairs.

Stairs are one of the 10 most common sources of injury for toddlers and small children. In fact, more than 900,000 children under the age of 5 were treated in emergency rooms (ERs) for stair-related injuries from 1999 to 2008, according to the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Based on the data, researchers estimate that a young child is treated every six minutes in an ER for a stair-related injury.

The majority of injuries were caused by children falling down the stairs. Some children also were injured in a fall while riding in a walker or stroller, riding on a tricycle or jumping. Most of the injuries happened at home, and children mainly suffered head and neck injuries, as well as broken bones.

Children are not always safe in a caregiver's arms while on the stairs either. The study found that 25% of injuries to children under the age of 1 happened when they were being carried down the stairs.

To protect your child from stair-related injuries, follow these tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Install safety railings at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Keep stairs free of toys and other clutter that may cause tripping.



- Make sure stairs are well-lit at all times.
- Monitor your child on the stairs and teach your child that playing on the stairs is dangerous.
- Discourage your child from carrying toys or other objects while climbing stairs. Large objects may cause the child to lose balance and fall.
- In general, avoid carrying your child up and down stairs. When you must carry your child on the stairs, do not carry any other objects because this may cause you to lose your balance and fall.
- Remove your child from strollers when using stairs. When possible, use elevators or ramps instead of stairs.
- Always use the handrail.

— Jennifer Haderspeck

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