

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

More children die from preventable injuries than all childhood diseases

Unfortunately, not all the sounds of summer are pleasant. The helpless cry of a little girl as she hits her head on the pavement in a fall from her bicycle.

A frantic mother making desperate attempts to breathe life into her young son found floating in the family swimming pool. This year, these tragic scenes will probably become a painful reality for one in four Canadian families. Childhood injury is a critical national problem that affects every community across the country.

Every year, more Canadian children die from preventable injuries than all childhood diseases combined. And thousands more children are seriously injured, sometimes for life, at great cost to themselves, their families, the community and the health system.

Safe Kids Canada offers these tips to protect children from harm.

Safety checklist

- ✓ Our family buckles up correctly for every car ride.
- ✓ Our family always wears helmets when bicycling.
- ✓ Kids under 10 never cross streets alone.
- ✓ Kids are always supervised in or near water.
- ✓ Our home has working smoke detectors and we check the batteries monthly.
- ✓ Our water heaters are set no higher than 49°C to prevent scald burns.
- ✓ Kids are closely supervised on playgrounds.
- ✓ Kids are protected against falls from windows, stairs and furniture.
- ✓ Household cleaners, medicines, and vitamins are stored in a locked cabinet out of the reach of our kids.
- ✓ Our home has emergency numbers near telephones and first aid supplies.

Buckle up for a safe ride

Proper use of car seats and seat belts can dramatically reduce a child's risk of injury and death if involved in a car crash.

- ✓ Any car seat sold in Canada must meet Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. This information can be found on a label on the car seat.
- ✓ Children in forward facing car seats must have their car seat secured to the car with a tether strap and fastened to the frame of the car with an anchor bolt.
- ✓ Car seats are effective only if the child is the right weight and height for the car seat.

Riding a bike? Wear a helmet.

Bicycle crashes are the leading cause of hospital admissions for head injuries to children. Only Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia have bicycle helmet laws for children. But, wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head and brain injury by 85 per cent.

- ✓ Buy a helmet approved by the Canadian Standards Association available across Canada for as low as \$15.
- ✓ A helmet should fit snugly on a

child's head. It should not tilt backwards or slide down over her eyes. The chin strap should always be tight enough that only one finger can fit between the chin strap and the child's chin.

Watch out for water hazards

Children must always be supervised in or near water. In 1993, 86 children in Canada under the age of 15 died from drowning.

- ✓ A backyard swimming pool or hot tub should be surrounded by a fence that is at least four feet high and difficult to climb. The fence should have a gate that closes and locks by itself.
 - ✓ Children should wear life jackets at all times when in, on or near water. Teach children to test water depth before diving in.
 - ✓ Young children under the age of five can drown in bathtubs, buckets or toilet bowls.
- Play safe**
Choking is the most common cause of playground death.
- ✓ Remove drawstrings and tuck in scarves or other loose clothing to prevent choking.

- ✓ Skipping ropes should never be used at playgrounds.
- Home safe home**

Simple home improvements can help create a safe environment for children.

- ✓ Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs. Do not use gates with diamond-shaped openings, a child's head can get caught in these openings.
- ✓ Check that all windows and screens are secure.
- ✓ Keep all household cleaners, medicines and alcohol in locked cabinets well out of a child's reach.

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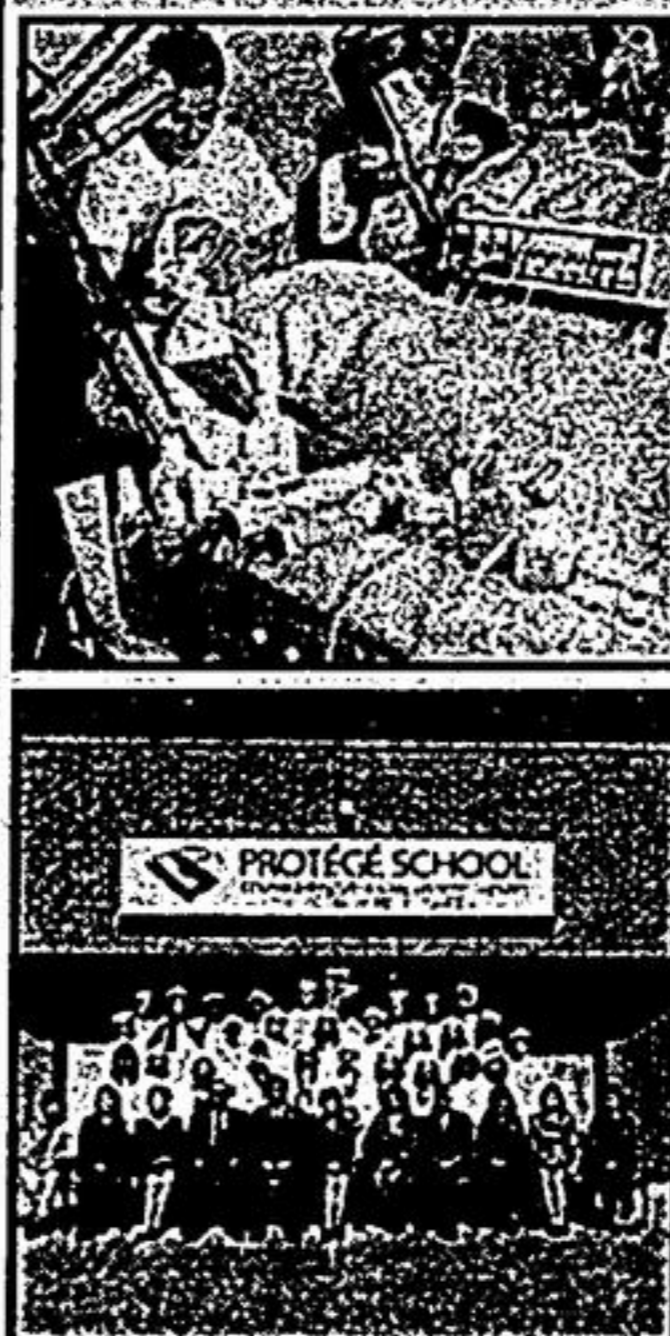
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