



A safe home is in your hands.

Programs : Home Safety Month

State of Home Safety in America™

The State of Home Safety in America™ report was commissioned by the Home Safety Council and conducted by the University of North Carolina Injury Prevention Research Center with the assistance of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, and the University of North Carolina Survey Research Unit. The study represents an unprecedented initiative to pull together national data on the prevalence of both fatal and nonfatal unintentional home injuries in America, as well as to identify and quantify the causes.

Unintentional Home Injuries

- In 1998, nearly 20,000 deaths associated with unintentional injury occurred in the home, representing a rate of 7.15 deaths for every 100,000 persons in the United States.
- Nonfatal injuries at home prompted more than 20 million medical visits, including nearly 10 million visits each to emergency departments and private physician's offices.
- The leading causes of home injury death in 1998 were falls and poisonings, accounting for 6,756 and 5,758 deaths, respectively.
- Older adults, both men and women, experienced the highest rates of unintentional home injury death among all age groups, with persons older than 75 experience injury deaths 3 to 10 times higher than people of younger age groups.

Slips & Falls

- Falls, the leading cause of non fatal unintentional injuries occurring at home, accounted for 5.6 million injuries.
- The rates and national estimates of the number of fall deaths were highest among those older than 64.
- 17 percent of all fall deaths were associated with stairs or steps.
- Consumer products most often associated with emergency department visits included stairs and steps and floors.
- More than one-half of patients visiting emergency departments for falls at home were either younger than 15 or age 65 and older.

Poisoning

- Poisonings are the second leading causes of unintentional injury related death.
- The highest rates of poisoning deaths were among males 25-64 years of age.
- Males experienced more fatal and nonfatal unintentional injuries at home than females.

Fires & Burns

- Burns, scalds and injuries from fires are the third leading cause of unintentional home injury death.
- The number of individuals who die from fire related injuries increases with age.

Cost of Unintentional Injury

- Unintentional home injuries cost society up to \$379 billion annually. The largest portion of the loss results from lost quality of life, followed by work loss and medical costs.
- Compared to other costs in the year studied (1998); unintentional home injury costs
 1. Nearly equal to the \$407 billion cost of violence in the United States.
 2. Up to 90 percent of the annual cost of U.S. highway crashes (\$432 billion)
 3. At least as much as (and up to 40 percent more than) the total spent by U.S. consumers on all household utilities (electricity, gas, oil and water) in the year studied.

Safe Home Practices

The Home Safety Council conducted a survey of safety issues and preventative practices in the home. The survey focused on falls, poisoning and fires/burns – three leading causes of unintentional home injuries in the nation. Key finding of the survey included:

Falls

- One-third of all household with stairs do not have banisters or handrails on at least one set of stairs.
- 48 percent of households have windows at a second-floor level or above, yet of those only one-quarter report they have window locks or bars to prevent children from falling out.
- 63 percent of American households use bathtub mats or non-skid strips that help reduce bathtub falls. However only 19 percent of homes have grab bars to supplement their non-skid tub surfaces.

Poisoning

- In those homes where children (younger than six) live or visits at least once a year, 33 percent report keeping medicines in an easily accessible location such as on a table, shelf or countertop. 82 percent report keeping medicines in an unlocked drawer or cabinet.
- More than two-thirds (69 percent) of homes with young children present report that household chemicals such as cleaners, bleach or kerosene are stored in unlocked places.

Fires and Burns

- 97 percent of American households report having at least one smoke alarm. Of those, only 19 percent test them at least quarterly.
- 75 percent of respondents do not know the temperature setting on their hot water heaters, and 91 percent are unaware of the temperature of water at the tap, thus risking scald injuries.

Research methodologies included analyses of existing national data on fatal and nonfatal home injuries; the generation of cost estimates associated with these injuries; and a national random digit dial survey with respondents in 1,003 American households.



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Programs : Safe Steps

Safe Steps to Reduce Falls

Millions of Americans are only a step away from becoming victims of the leading cause of unintentional home injuries - slips and falls.

According to the State of Home Safety in America™ study conducted by the Home Safety Council, falls are by far the leading cause of unintentional home injury death. 5.6 million injuries resulted from slips and falls suffered at home in the year studied. The vast majority of fall deaths occur among people age 65 and older and fall death rates are higher for males.

In an effort to reduce injuries among people of all ages, the Home Safety Council encourages families to identify and correct potential slips and falls hazards in and around the home.

Home Safety "Walk-Through"

- Walk through your home to identify and remedy potential slipping, tripping and falling hazards. What to look for:
- All stairs and steps should be protected with a secure banister or hand-rail.
- Make sure all porches, hallways and stairwells are well lit. Use the maximum safe wattage in light fixtures. (Maximum wattage is typically posted inside light fixtures.)
- Use nightlights to help light hallways and bathrooms during night-time hours.
- Keep stairs, steps, landings and all floors clear. Reduce clutter and safely tuck away telephone and electrical cords out of walkways.
- In homes with children, make sure toys and games are not left on steps or landings. When very young children are present use safety gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs.
- Use a non-slip mat or install adhesive safety strips or decals in bathtubs and showers. If you use a bath mat on the floor, choose one that has a non-skid bottom.
- Install grab bars in bath and shower stalls. Don't use towel racks or wall-mounted soap dishes as grab bars; they can easily come loose, causing a fall.
- Install window guards to prevent young children from falling out of upper windows. (Select guards with emergency-release devices.)
- Keep the floor clean. Promptly clean up grease, water and other spills.
- If you use throw rugs in your home place them over a rug-liner or choose rugs with non-skid backs to reduce your chance of slipping.
- Use a sturdy step stool with hand rails when climbing is necessary.
- Follow medication dosages closely. Using multiple medications and/or using medications incorrectly may cause dizziness, weakness and other side effects which can lead to a dangerous fall.



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Safety Guide : Slips & Falls

Stairway Safety

According to the Home Safety Council's national report on home injuries, the State of Home Safety in America™, falls accounted for more than one-third of all unintentional home injury deaths in 1999. More than a million of those who required emergency department visits to treat falls at home were age 65 and over. Falls from stairs and steps were the second leading cause of death due to falls. Follow the Home Safety Council's steps to stairway safety to make your home safer from falls:

- Use the handrail. (All stairways and steps, no matter how short, should have handrails on both sides.)
- Install bright lights and on/off switches at the top and bottom of each stairwell and over porches and entryways.
- Keep stairways and steps clear of all objects. Never use the stairs as temporary storage or for displaying decorative items.
- Check stairs for worn or loose carpeting or protruding carpet tacks. If your steps have a smooth surface, consider installing anti-slip tread to provide safer traction.
- Paint the bottom basement step white to make it more visible. Mistaking the lowest step for floor level can cause you to lose your balance and fall.
- In homes with young children, use safety gates at the tops and bottoms of stairways.
- Wear footwear with traction. Avoid wearing socks or smooth-soled slippers, which can slide out from under you on bare floors.
- Avoid carrying vision blocking loads. Carry a small enough load up and down stairs that you can see where you are stepping and can easily keep one hand free to hold onto a handrail.
- Avoid placing throw rugs at the top or bottom of a stairway as small scatter rugs can slide or the edges can become curled. If it is necessary to put a rug at the bottom of a stairway, make sure it has a skid-resistant backing and use carpet tape to keep the corners from curling.
- If you have steps outside your home, keep them free of ice and snow. To prevent a tripping hazard, periodically check steps and walkways for broken or loose bricks, cement or stone.

Stay Fit to Prevent Falls

If you require eyeglasses for vision enhancement, use them. Consider keeping a spare pair of glasses near your medicine chest to ensure you can accurately read the labels on your medications before taking them.

Talk with your pharmacist and physicians to ensure that all your prescription medications are being tracked and that there are no contra-indications when multiple prescriptions are taken.

The risk of falling is increased by illness, fatigue, and lower extremity weakness. Researchers agree that staying healthy and fit can help prevent falls. Strengthening exercises can help. Gentle exercise

programs such as Tai Chi have been shown to improve balance and strengthen muscles safely. Consult your physician before beginning any exercise program.

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