



# Falls

safekids  
Aotearoa

Starship  
Foundation



The risk of falling begins at birth, as soon as a baby is able to move and roll off a surface. As they grow and start climbing and jumping to explore their world, the risks change. Their curiosity and lack of co-ordination and balance increase their risk of falling. Young children will climb furniture to grab items that are out of reach or climb a tree that's unsafe. They may also be tempted by open windows and steep stairs.

While minor slips and falls are a normal part of children's development and very common, some can result in broken bones, cuts or other more significant injuries. A serious fall may result in a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or spinal injury that may affect a child for the rest of their life.

**3** More than **3** children are hospitalised every day from falls.

- Falls hospitalisations each year:
  - **122** children from tripping, slipping and stumbling
  - **225** children from playgrounds
  - **110** children from beds
  - **126** children from chairs (high chairs, couch, sofa)
  - **102** children from decks or balconies



**49%** of Traumatic Brain Injuries in children are caused by falls.

## THE CAUSES



### 0-12 MONTHS

Falls when being carried.



### 1-4 YEARS

Slipping, tripping, stumbling and falling out of bed.



### 5-9 YEARS

Playgrounds and falling out of trees.



### 10-14 YEARS

Falling off bikes, skateboards and scooters, colliding.

## WHO IS GETTING INJURED?



### 0-4 YEARS

Account for around 52% of hospitalisations for falls.



### BOYS

Are 1.5 times more likely to be injured than girls.



### URBAN CHILDREN

And those with high socio-economic deprivation.

## SAFETY DEVICES



- Window guards and latches.\*
- Stair and safety gates.
- Helmets with an approved safety standard.

\* windows above the first floor should have an emergency release in case of fire.

## WHERE IT HAPPENS



### IN THE HOME

31% of fall-related hospitalisations.



### SCHOOLS OR PUBLIC AREAS

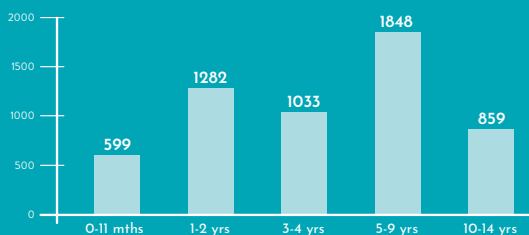
24% of fall-related hospitalisations.



### SPORTS OR ATHLETIC AREAS

11% of fall-related hospitalisations.

## HOSPITALISATIONS 2013-2017



## THE TREND



Rate of hospitalisations for fall injuries has declined about 19% over the past 10 years.

# Top Safety Tips

## Birth to 11 months

- Avoid carrying babies when doing tasks, or when feeling tired.
- Use approved safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs and attach them to the wall, if possible.
- Avoid baby walkers, which do not have safety features and can easily roll down the stairs.
- If you need to move away from your baby while they are on a changing table, take them with you.
- Keep babies strapped in when using high chairs, infant carriers, shopping trolleys, swings and strollers.

## 1-2 years

- Install window guards and stops to prevent window falls. Windows above the first floor should have an emergency release device in case of fire. Move any objects and furniture away from windows.
- Wet floors are a potential slip hazard for young children. Wipe up spills and wet floors immediately.
- Find playgrounds with shock-absorbing surfaces, such as wood chips, mulch, rubber or sand.

## 3-4 years

- Steer your children to age-appropriate activities to help prevent falls from play equipment.
- High porches, decks, stairs and balconies all have a high fall risk, so find alternative play areas.
- Talk to children about appropriate play behaviours.

## 5-9 years

- Bunk beds encourage climbing so they should only be used by children over nine years of age. They should have guardrails on the top bunk and an opening for entering and exiting of no more than 40cm.
- Talk to your children about how to be safe on a trampoline and use the 'one at a time' rule.
- Ensure your child is wearing a helmet when riding a bike, scooter or a skateboard.

## 10-14 years

- Discuss the dangers of risk-taking around climbing.
- Remind them to always wear a properly fitting helmet with an approved safety standard.
- Encourage the use of wrist guards and knee and elbow pads when using scooters and skateboards.

### **+** First aid

- Call 111 immediately if a child has had a fall and is in pain, unconscious, being sick or seems sleepy, has trouble breathing, or is bleeding (including from the ear). They may have a broken bone or serious head injury.
- Give CPR if the child is unconscious and not breathing.

### **+** First aid for a child who has had a broken bone

- Keep the injured arm or leg still and support the injured arm or leg with a pillow or sling.
- Raise the arm or leg higher than the heart to help reduce swelling.
- Take them to the nearest hospital Emergency Department, if an ambulance is not needed.
- The child will need pain relief.

If your child is injured you can find out more about ACC support at [www.acc.co.nz/im-injured](http://www.acc.co.nz/im-injured).  
ACC Claims: 0800 101 996 or email [claims@acc.co.nz](mailto:claims@acc.co.nz).

For detailed references on the data and information contained in this card and to download additional copies visit [www.starship.org.nz/safekids/reference-cards](http://www.starship.org.nz/safekids/reference-cards).