**THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024**

**Accidents are the fourth biggest cause of death in children aged one to nine**

* In 2022/23, over 50,000 children under 10 were admitted to hospital following a non-transport accident in England
* Most common accidental injury in young children is caused by a fall – either down the stairs or from a highchair or bed – followed by crushing or striking injury, such as from unsupervised use of objects around the home
* Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) today launches [‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report), which reveals new data into rising accidents numbers and calls on the Government to implement a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS – which includes eight policy recommendations to improve child safety

Preventable accidents are the fourth biggest cause of death in young children aged between one and nine after cancer, birth defects, and diseases of the brain and nerves, according to a new report\*, ‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’, launched today by RoSPA and action must be taken.

The rate of all accidental deaths has increased by 42% over the last decade and RoSPA is calling on Government to implement a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS - which includes eight policy recommendations to improve child safety\*\*.

RoSPA’s new report reveals that children are one of the most vulnerable groups in society and in 2022/23, over 50,000 children under 10 were admitted to hospital and over 60 tragically died following a non-transport accident in England. Although accidents do happen, the frequency and severity of them can be prevented.

The most common injury was from falls, such as down the stairs or from a highchair or bed, which accounted for 22,000 hospital admissions. This was followed by 13,000 admissions for crushing or striking, such as accidents caused by broken glass or unsupervised use of objects around the home. More than 2,600 hospital admissions were because of injuries caused by other people, such as children colliding with each other, or animals – including 1,100 dog bites.

A further 2,380 hospital admissions in under 10s were for accidental poisonings, such as children digesting household products, medicines and cosmetics. There were over 670 young children hospitalised for accidental choking, strangulation or suffocation, such as swallowing a small toy or playing with nappy sacks, and 100 young children were hospitalised after a drowning incident. RoSPA is calling on government to ensure that there is mandatory classroom-based education on water safety and swimming lessons in schools, as both go hand-in-hand to support water safety among young people.

Deprivation is closely associated with an increased risk of childhood accidents. In turn accidental injuries can make inequalities worse by causing children to take time off school, leaving them with long-term health problems and creating economic impacts for their households.

**Most accidents take place at home**

Instead of being a sanctuary of safety, being at home is one of the most dangerous places for young children and people of all ages to be, as over half (55%) of all accidental deaths are due to an accident at home. Out of all of those admitted to hospital after an accident (excluding road accident), over two thirds (62%) took place at home.

Falls are by far the most common cause of both accidental death (46%) and accident-related hospital admission (61%) in the UK across all ages. Out of all those who were admitted to hospital after an accidental fall, over half (53%) fell in their own home.

Poisonings are the second biggest cause of accidental death, and in 2019 76% of these took place at home. While most poisonings come from alcohol and drug use in the home, threats also come in other forms. In England and Wales 42 people die every year from accidental carbon monoxide poisoning, with a further 224 people hospitalised and 4,000 attending A&E. Children are particularly vulnerable to accidental poisonings, with 1,956 hospital admissions in England alone among under 5s in 2022/23.

**RoSPA is calling for Government to create a National Accident Prevention Strategy to save lives, boost the economy and free up capacity in the NHS - which includes eight policy recommendations to improve child safety. Read RoSPA’s full report,** [**‘*Safer Lives, Stronger Nation’*.**](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report)

**Dr James Broun, Research Manager at RoSPA, said:** “Our new report shows that young children at home are particularly at risk from accidents which can cause serious injuries or worse. It is a heart-breaking tragedy that accidents are the fourth biggest cause of death in children aged between one and ten, and action must be taken as accidents are preventable. We are calling for a National Accident Prevention Strategy to sit across government departments so problems can be tackled at their core, which will better protect children from the risk of accidents at home, in school, while they’re travelling or in other public areas such as swimming pools.”

**RoSPA’s home accident prevention safety advice for parents and carers**

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| Stairs and windows | Fit a safety gate BS EN 1930:2011 at the top and bottom of stairsNever leave trip hazards on stairsStairs should be carefully maintained with strong balustradesStairs should be well litFit child resistant window restrictors but ensure you can get out easily in an emergencyDo not put anything under the window that can be climbed onFurniture at risk from being pulled over should be secured to the wall |
| Fires | Keep matches and lighters out of sight and reach of childrenAlways use fireguard BS 8423:2010 and secure it to the wallExtinguish and dispose of cigarettes properlyHave an escape route planned and practice itFit a smoke alarm which complies with BS EN 14604 2005 and check it regularly |
| Scalds and burns | Never hot a hot drink and a child at the same timeNever leave young children alone in the bathroomPut hot drinks out of children’s reach and away from edges of tablesTry to use a cordless kettleKeep small children out of the kitchen whenever possibleRun domestic hot water system at 46OC or fit a thermostatic mixing value to tapsAlways run the cold water in a bath first and test the temperature before letting a child get in Always use rear hotplates and turn panhandles away from the front of a cookerKeep hot irons, curling tongs and hair straighteners out of reach, even when cooling down |
| Glass-related accidents | Use safety glass to BS 6206 in all replacement windows and doors, especially at low levelMake existing glass safer by applying shatter resistant filmWhen buying furniture which incorporates glass, look for approval to BS EN 12521:2009 and BS 14749-2005, BS EN 14072:2003, BS EN 12150-1:2000 and BS EN 12600-2002Always clear up broken glass quickly and dispose of it safelyBuy a greenhouse with special safety glazing or isolate with fencing |
| Poisoning | Keep medicines and chemicals out of sight and reach of children, preferably in a locked cupboardWherever possible, buy products in child resistant containersAlways store chemicals in their original containersDispose of unwanted medicines and chemicals safelyAvoid buying plants with poisonous leavers or berries or those that can irritate the skin |
| Suffocating and choking | Choose toys appropriate to the age of the childKeep small objects, such as marbles, out of reach of children under threeEncourage older children to keep their toys away from younger playmatesPull cords on curtains and blinds should be kept short and kept out of reachKeep animals, especially cats, out of the bedroom and use a net on a pramKeep nappy sacks out of reach of babies and young childrenNever store nappy sacks in or around the cot or pramSmall food, such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, blackberries and other soft fruit should be cut into quarters to prevent chokingBabies should sleep on their back with their feet at the foot of their pram and blankets tucked across their chest and under their arms. Keep the cot free from bumpers, pillows and soft toys.Ensure children are the right age for the cot, bed or other sleep product. Kids 2-in-1 portable airbeds/sleeping bags are not suitable for babies. Always check the labels and follow the safety instructions. |

More information on child safety advice can be found here: <https://www.rospa.com/policy/home-safety/advice/accidents-to-children>

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For further press information please contact:

Anna Upton aupton@ROSPA.com, 07834904524

Joseph Tinkler jtinkler@ROSPA.com, 07785 540 349

**Notes to Editor(s)**

* A range of case studies and accompanying photographs are available by request
* Please contact the press team to arrange interviews with spokespeople
* Media pack can be found here: <https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/media-pack>
* [RoSPA](http://www.rospa.com/) is a leading voice in health and safety that campaigns to reduce avoidable accidents. Our vision is to create a life free from accidental injury, and with the support of our members, this is at the core of everything we do. We lobby Government on issues that matter, pioneer the world’s largest health and safety awards and provide a suite of RoSPA qualifications that help learners and employers keep their colleagues safe from accidents and ill-health.

\*The full report, entitled: ‘Safer Lives, Stronger Nation: Our Call for a National Accident Prevention Strategy’ is available here: [www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report](https://www.rospa.com/campaigns-and-fundraising/current-campaigns/national-accident-prevention-strategy/report)

\*\*RoSPA is calling on the Government to implement the following eight measures to improve child safety as part of the National Accident Prevention Strategy:

1. Government should roll out a **permanent, national home safety programme** to deliver risk assessments, advice and equipment to disadvantaged households with young children
2. Government should deliver **public campaigns** around child safety
3. Government should provide up-to-date **home safety training** and improved resourcing for midwives, health visitors, early years practitioners and other family support workers
4. Government should ensure that **resourcing** among these vital workers is consistent across localities and generally improved
5. Government should either support an expanded remit for the **National Child Mortality Database** so that it works across the whole of the UK; or devolved nations should set up equivalent organisations in their jurisdictions while ensuring that data can be compared across nations.
6. Government must ensure that all children are **able to swim** (including through swimming lessons at school)
7. Government must ensure that all children are taught **water safety in classroom**-based lessons
8. Government must embed **product safety** and consumer rights in the **National Curriculum**