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## PREVENTING INJURIES IN THE CHILD CARE SETTING

[Preventing Injuries](#)

[Preparing for Injuries](#)

[Unintentional Injuries](#)

[Hazards in the Facility](#)

[Intentional Injuries](#)

[Aggressive Behavior and Bites](#)

[Child Abuse](#)

[Physical Abuse](#)

[Emotional/Verbal Abuse](#)

[Sexual Abuse](#)

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The risk of an injury happening is directly related to the physical environment and children's behaviors, and how these are managed. Injuries can be divided into two categories--unintentional and intentional. Unintentional injuries may result from choking, falls, burns, drowning, swallowing toxic or other materials (poisoning), cuts from sharp objects, exposure to environmental hazards such as chemicals, radon, or lead, or animal bites, or other "accidents." Intentional injuries are usually due to bites, fights, or abuse.

### Preventing Injuries

You can prevent most injuries that occur in the child care setting by:

- Supervising children carefully.
- Checking the child care and play areas for, and getting rid of, hazards.
- Using safety equipment for children, such as car seats and seat belts, bicycle helmets, and padding, such as for the knees and elbows.
- Understanding what children can do at different stages of development. Children learn by testing their abilities. They should be allowed to participate in activities appropriate for their development even though these activities may result in some minor injuries, such as scrapes and bruises. However, children should be prevented from taking part in activities or using equipment that is beyond their abilities and that may result in major injuries such as broken bones.
- Teaching children how to use playground equipment safely (e.g., going down the slide feet first).

### Preparing for Injuries

Injuries require immediate action. You will need to assess the injury to determine what type of medical attention, if any, is required. Everyone working with children should have up-to-date training in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). At a minimum, one person with this training must be present at the child care site at all times.

## **Unintentional Injuries**

Children are often injured unintentionally during the normal course of a day. Many of these injuries, such as scrapes and bruises, are minor and only need simple first aid. Other injuries can be serious and require medical attention beyond first aid. Call 911 or your local emergency number if an injured child has any of the following conditions:

- severe neck or head injury,
- choking,
- severe bleeding,
- shock,
- chemicals in eyes, on skin, or ingested in the mouth, or
- near-drowning.

See the first aid chart in the next chapter for what actions to take for some common injuries.

## **Hazards in the Facility**

Children in child care have many opportunities for coming in contact with substances that can hurt them. Child care providers can help reduce children's exposure to these hazards by taking preventive measures. Chapter III, on Maintaining a Safe and Healthy Facility, gives information on preventing children's exposure to such harmful substances as chemicals, lead, air pollution, and radon in the child care setting.

## **Intentional Injuries**

### **Aggressive Behavior and Bites**

Children show aggression (hostile, injurious, or destructive behavior) either verbally (what they say) or physically (how they act). Verbal aggression by other children or adults, such as belittling, ridiculing, or taunting a child, can injure a child's self-esteem. Physical aggression, such as biting, hitting, scratching, and kicking, may result in physical injuries. Parents have become greatly concerned about physical injuries that cause bleeding to their child, especially being bitten by another child, because they fear this may expose their child to a risk of infection from HIV, which causes AIDS, or hepatitis B virus, which can cause liver damage.

To deter aggressive behavior you should:

- Set clear limits for children's behavior. Explain those limits to both children and their parents.
- Explain to a child who is showing aggressive behavior how the aggressive actions affect the victim.

- Redirect a child's aggressive behavior by, for example, engaging the child in a sport or activity that interests the child.
- Teach and reinforce coping skills.
- Encourage children to express feelings verbally, in a healthy way.
- Provide acceptable opportunities for children to release anger. Running outside, kicking balls, punching bags, and other physical play allows children to let off steam.

If a child is bitten by another child:

- Administer first aid.
- Ask the parents of the injured child to seek medical care if the bite causes bleeding.
- Notify the parents of both children if the bite causes bleeding. Testing the children for HIV or hepatitis B may be considered and should be discussed with the health care providers of both children involved.

**A child who is known to be positive for HIV or hepatitis B AND who bites, even after efforts to change the behavior, should be taken out of the child care setting until the biting ceases**