

ShowMe Health

Safety is No Accident

For publication Tuesday, March 29th

Author: Ann Hoppe, Public Information Supervisor

It only takes a moment for an injury to happen – a fall on a stair, a moment's glance away from the road, a biking or sports-related injury, a medication mix-up. But it also takes just a moment to protect against injuries and make communities safer. The potential for injury is all around us. Each year, nearly 150,000 people die from injuries, and almost 30 million people are injured seriously enough to go to the emergency room.

Injuries are not "accidents", and we can prevent them from happening. Taking actions such as wearing a seatbelt, properly installing and using child safety seats, wearing a helmet and storing cleaning supplies in locked cabinets are important ways to proactively promote safety and prevent injuries.

During National Public Health Week 2011, the American Public Health Association (APHA) needs your help to educate Americans that "Safety is No Accident". Together, we can help Americans live injury-free in all areas of life: at work, at home, at play, in your community and anywhere people are on the move. We all need to do our part to prevent injuries and violence in our communities. Join us as we work together to create a safer and healthier nation.

You can protect yourself, your family and community by taking action, both big and small, to prevent injury. Here are just a few examples:

At home...

- * Assess your home for potential hazards such as poor lighting and uneven surfaces to prevent falls.
- * Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.
- * Establish a plan for how you would evacuate from your home in the event of an emergency.
- * Make sure all electrical outlets are covered and inaccessible to children.
- * Supervise young children whenever they're near cooking surfaces and never leave food unattended on the stove.
- * Program emergency numbers, such as the Poison Control Hotline (1-800-222-1222), into your phone to call in the event of a poisoning emergency.
- * Store cleaning supplies and medicines in locked cabinets out of the reach of children.

* Check your hot water heater periodically and adjust the thermostat to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to avoid burns.

At work...

* Understand and follow all workplace safety regulations and best practices. Go beyond the minimum required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

* Provide required or recommended protective equipment and reflective gear to reduce employee exposure to hazards.

* Create safe work environments by identifying and fixing workplace hazards such as unstable surfaces and malfunctioning vehicles.

* Promote workplace safety by offering tips on your company bulletin board, website or newsletter.

At play...

* Wear a helmet and other properly fitted protective gear.

* Have a physical before starting a new sport and warm-up each time before beginning.

* Monitor children while they are at play to ensure safety.

* Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated.

* Educate coaches on how to ensure the health and safety of youth athletes.

On the move...

- Wear a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short.
- Make sure children are buckled up in a car seat, booster seat or seat belt, whichever is appropriate for your child's age.
- Be mindful of the environment and be cautious when crossing the road. Use sidewalks and avoid jaywalking.
- Wear a helmet and reflective gear when on a bike, skateboard, scooter or other motor vehicle to avoid injuries.
- Avoid texting, eating, using the phone or grooming while driving.
- Be a designated driver. Don't drink and drive, let others drink and drive, or get into a vehicle with someone who has been drinking.

- Avoiding driving while you are tired.

In your community...

- * Work with school leaders to implement school violence and bullying programs.
- * Keep weapons in a locked and safe place, away from children.
- * Be a caring adult in the life of young person.
- * Call the police or local child protective services if you suspect an older adult has abused or a child neglected.

There is much more you can do to prevent injuries beyond these actions. Raise awareness of safety and injury prevention within your community during National Public Health Week. You can help make your home and community a safer place to live.

Source: American Public Health Association