

Suffocation Prevention: Infants and Children

Suffocation Among Infants and Children 1-4, Virginia 2002-2006

- Suffocations are the leading cause of injury death among infants and children 1-4; resulting in 83 deaths over a five year period.
- 79% of unintentional infant suffocation deaths occurred in a sleeping environment. Among children 1-4, the leading cause of unintentional suffocation was hanging/strangulation (40%).
- From 2002-2006, 121 infants and children were hospitalized due to a suffocation related injury. 98% of these were unintentional in nature.
- 53% of unintentional suffocation hospitalizations were the result of the inhalation/ingestion of an object, while 45% were from food.

Prevention Tips

Suffocation is a preventable public health problem in Virginia. To prevent suffocations among infants and children:

- Place an infant on his/her back on a firm, flat crib mattress in a crib with a JPMA (Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association) label indication that it meets national safety standards. Cover the mattress with a fitted sheet designed for use with a crib mattress.
- Remove pillows, comforters, stuffed toys, crib bumpers/pads, and other soft products from the crib.
- Ensure that the crib has no missing, improperly placed, loose or broken hardware.
- Check the spacing between crib slats to ensure that the baby's body cannot slide through the opening. Crib slats should be no more than 2 and 3/8" apart (about the width of a soda can). Old cribs with missing slats pose a significant hazard.
- Do not allow children under 3 to eat small, round or hard foods, including hot dogs, hard candy, nuts, grapes and popcorn.
- To avoid choking, always supervise young children while they are eating, and keep small objects that are potential choking hazards out of their reach.
- Ensure that children play with age-appropriate toys according to safety labels. Inspect old and new toys regularly for damage. Make any necessary repairs or discard damaged toys.
- Keep balloons out of the reach of children under 8 years old. Un-inflated balloons should always be stored out of reach of young children. An adult should always supervise when children in this age group play with inflated balloons. Always deflate and throw away balloons after use and discard balloon pieces immediately.
- Check the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission website (www.cpsc.gov) regularly to obtain information on recent toy recalls.

Resources:

- Safe Kids USA
www.usa.safekids.org/
- Consumer Product Safety Commission:
Neighborhood Safety Network
www.cpsc.gov/nsn/nsn.html
- National Center for injury Prevention and Control (CDC)
www.cdc.gov/ncipc
- Division of Injury and Violence Prevention,
Virginia Health Department
www.vahealth.org/civp



Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)*

Suffocation related injury deaths among infants in this report do not include Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Despite this, it is estimated that around 900 deaths attributed to SIDS each year may actually be caused by suffocation due to soft bedding.

Division of Injury and Violence Prevention
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1-800-732-8333
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