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Child Injury Deaths: They Are Preventable!

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Injuries continue to be the leading cause of child death in New York City and in the United States. It's important to understand that most injuries **CAN** be prevented. Injury deaths can be classified as unintentional (accidental) and intentional (homicides and suicides). I served on the NYC Child Fatality Review Advisory Team (CFRAT) for many years and champion their efforts at protecting children. Their recent report is a "must read" for parents, teachers, health care providers and all charged with protecting children.

The [2016 Report](#) was recently released by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). The report describes patterns of child injury for the period of 1999 through 2013. Unintentional injury death rates remain highest among children living in very high-poverty areas and among non-Hispanic Black Children.

Although there has been a slight decline in recent years, motor vehicle-related injuries are still the leading cause of injury death among New York City children age one to twelve years old. These deaths include pedestrians or bicycle riders that are hit by a motor vehicle in addition to a child being an occupant of a motor-vehicle. Most children were not in cars when they were killed. According [Vision Zero](#), a NYC initiative to eliminate traffic deaths, vehicles seriously injure or kill a New Yorker every two hours.

Injury death from fires ranked second. The CFRAT emphasizes that although many see these deaths as "accidents" that one cannot foresee, the majority are in fact preventable as they follow patterns that can be predicted. Parents must be diligent about teaching their child safety concepts from crossing the street to not playing with matches - and - keep a strong lookout for their child's safety at all times.

The report also reviewed intentional injuries to children (homicide and suicide). These injury rates remain highest among children living in poverty and among non-Hispanic Black Children. The homicide rates were consistently higher among children aged one to two years compared with other child age

groups. Also alarming is that child suicides have increased. Suicides occurred among children aged nine to 12 years old. According to the report, the number of suicides among children increased from two in 1999-2003 to 13 in 2009-2013. Suicides among children also increased nationally during this time.

Recommendations for parents regarding preventing unintentional injuries include:

- Serve as a role model for safe walking and street crossing. And, yes, this means you shouldn't cross when the traffic signal says not to, even though you are tempted to.
- Teach your child to cross at crosswalks or the corner instead of in the middle of a street.
- Obey the traffic signals, don't cross, means don't cross.
- Look both ways, before you cross and listen for on-coming traffic - there should be no distraction from wearing headphones or reading and texting on iPhones.
- Be sure that your household has a working smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector and an evacuation plan in case of a fire or other emergency.

Vision Zero and the CFRAT recommend several good websites for parents to visit for more safety information.

They include:

- It [CAN Wait](#) Campaign, that helps drivers curb texting and cell phone use while driving.
- [Safekids.org](#) Safe Kids Worldwide is a global organization dedicated to preventing injuries in children, the number one killer of kids in the United States. They offer very good safety information on traffic and biking safety too.

Recommendations for parents regarding preventing intentional injuries included:

- Invite your child to talk to you anytime that they feel anxious, worried or hopeless. Listen to your child. If you note mood changes along with depression, please speak with them about it. Your child's pediatrician can also help you address these concerns.
- If you as a parent need support to handle stress, reach out for help. The NYSPCC recommends the [Prevent Child Abuse NY's Parent Help-line](#) or 1-800-CHILDREN
- If you or your child is living with violence at home, call 311 for the Domestic Violence Hotline or call [Safe Horizon](#) directly at 1-800-621-HOPE.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect how to make a report if you think a baby or child is at risk. In New York State call 1-800-635-1522. Visit the [NYSPCC website](#) to learn how and access phone numbers for each state's hotline.

Parents, please take the time to go over these safety issues with your child on a regular basis, make it part of your family safety planning conversations. Your child's life could depend on it. Remember, injury deaths can be prevented.

For more information on keeping your child safe visit nyspcc.org.