

Injury prevention requires protection of the child and education of the caregiver. Nurses in ambulatory care settings, health maintenance centers, and visiting nurse agencies are in a most favorable position for injury education. Although early postpartum discharge may be restrictive for parent teaching, this is an excellent opportunity to introduce the family to infant safety and safety for other children as well. One approach to teaching injury prevention is to relate why children in various age groups are prone to specific types of injuries. However, injury prevention must also be practical. For instance, parents are taught bathroom cleaning agents, cosmetics, and personal care items can be placed on a top shelf in the linen closet, and towels or sheets can be stored on the lower shelves and floor. In addition, parents should be encouraged to take an infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) class to deal effectively with potential problems.

Parents need to remember that infants and young children cannot anticipate danger or understand when it is or is not present. When small children are in the home, dangerous objects must be removed or placed out of reach. Additionally, infants have no cognitive concept of cause and effect and therefore cannot relate meaning to experiences or potential dangers. A dead electrical wire may present no actual harm, but if the child is allowed to play with it, a poor behavior is enforced and will be practiced when the child encounters a live wire. Although it is always wise to explain why something is dangerous, it must be remembered that small children need to be physically removed from the situation.

It is not easy to teach safety, supervise closely, and refrain from saying “no” a hundred times a day. Parents become acutely aware of this dilemma as soon as their infants learn to crawl. When children are taught the meaning of “no,” they should also be taught what “yes” means. Children should be praised for playing with suitable toys, their efforts at behaving or listening should be reinforced, and innovative and creative recreational toys should be provided for them. Infants love to tear paper and avidly pursue books, magazines, or newspapers left on the floor. Instead of always scolding them for destroying a valued book, parents should provide child-safe books (e.g., those constructed of fabric) for them to play with. If they enjoy pots and pans, a cabinet can be arranged with safe utensils for them to explore.