



Backgrounder

Parachute Safe Kids Week is an annual awareness campaign designed to bring attention to predictable and preventable injuries in children. Parachute celebrates Safe Kids Week June 3 to June 9, 2024, with the theme of consumer product safety.

Audience: parents/caregivers of children from newborn to age 12.

Why consumer product safety is important

Children live in a world that is built for adults and as a result can be exposed to hazards that cause serious injury and even death. Parents expect the products they have in their home to be safe. Not all products that are for sale in Canada have standards or regulations and even when there are standards and regulations, there can still be products that are unsafe. The recall system, reporting and accessing information, can be confusing or parents may not know this exists. In addition, well-intentioned parents looking for less expensive options may access the second-hand market and online markets and these can be a source of products that may have been recalled, may not be legal for sale in Canada and expose children to dangers.

The term “consumer products” encompass a very large number of products in Canada. The federal government’s [Canada Consumer Product Safety Act](#), created in 2010, is meant to protect the public by addressing or preventing dangers to human health or safety posed by consumer products in Canada. Says the act’s summary: It “applies to suppliers of consumer products in Canada, including manufacturers, importers, distributors, advertisers and retailers.”

Consumer product statistics

The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates, based on Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program (CHIRPP) data, that almost half of injuries to children and youth up to age 19 are related to consumer products. Between 2013 and 2017, Health Canada's Consumer Product Safety Program received 9,017 consumer product reports from consumers and industry (Health Canada, 2022). Of these, 3,171 (35 per cent) mentioned an injury, 141 of which were fatal. Factors that may contribute to consumer product-related injuries include product quality (including adherence to standards), product characteristics (for example, products with blades or sharp edges), product use (i.e., whether a product is used as intended and by the intended user) and presence of known risk mitigation measures or safety devices (e.g., wearing a helmet while riding a bicycle, the battery compartment enclosure on a toy being screwed in place).

Facts on selected consumer products

Button batteries

- Overall, between 2016 and 2023, there were an estimated 1,155 cases of injuries associated with button batteries (60 per cent male). Approximately two-thirds of these incidents occurred in 2020 or later.
- Children under 6 years of age represented 84 per cent of cases and 1-to-2-year-old children were most frequent (41 per cent).
- The source of the battery was known in 60 per cent of the incidents. Of these, watches (53 per cent) and toys (12 per cent) were the most common. Other sources included calculators, hearing aids, remote controls, flashlights and opened packages of button batteries.
- When reported, 93 per cent of incidents occurred in the child's own home. In 7.3 per cent of the cases multiple batteries were ingested. In 17 per cent of incidents, there was a delay of a day or more before presentation to ED. Overall, 19 per cent of the patients were admitted to hospital.

Toys

- Between April 1, 2011 and November 9, 2022 there were 29,268 cases of toy-related injuries, with 63 per cent occurring in males and 37 per cent in females (n = 18,537 and n = 10,731 respectively).

- The number of toy-related injuries by age group are as follows:
 - less than 1 year (n = 1,012, 3.5 per cent)
 - 1 to 4 years (n = 13,298, 45.4 per cent)
 - 5 to 9 years (n = 8,590, 29.3 per cent)
 - 10 to 17 years (n = 6,368, 21.8 per cent)
- Overall, open wound injuries (23.5 per cent) were the most frequent toy-related injury, followed by fractures (19 per cent) and bruises/abrasions or soft tissue injuries (16.2 per cent). The most frequent types of injuries varied by age group:
 - Less than 1 year: Traumatic brain injuries at 29.1 per cent, followed by foreign body injuries at 16.0 per cent.
 - 1 to 4 years: Open wounds at 32.3 per cent, followed by foreign body injuries at 17.1 per cent.
 - 5 to 17 years: Fractures at 28.7 per cent, followed by bruises/abrasions or soft tissue injuries at 19.8 per cent.

Consumer product safety basics

Beyond the issues for specific products that parents need to know, there are some basics on consumer products that are important:

- **Not all products that are sold in Canada have been tested for safety.** Survey results show that most Canadians believe that, if a product is available for sale, it is safe or has been tested for safety. But this is not always the case in Canada, particularly for children's products. The result is an increasing risk of product-related injuries to children and youth due to their age, cognitive abilities and developmental stage. Injuries from the use of consumer products are common, often serious, and sometimes fatal.
- **Not all products that are sold in Canada have a standard or regulations they must meet.** Children's toys and related products manufactured, imported, advertised or sold in Canada are subject to the Canadian

Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA) and the Toys Regulations. There are products that do not have Canadian standards but buying those that meet the U.S. standard a recommended, for example, bunk beds. Many other consumer products do not have any standards or regulations and rely on reports from consumer to identify safety concerns or injury.

- **Concern(s) with a product and/or an injury from a product can and should be reported to Health Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/report-incident.html>).** Anyone can report an incidence from a consumer product; it is voluntary. Sharing information about a product that may cause harm can help to stop similar incidents or injuries from happening to others, help Health Canada monitor the safety of products and how they are used. The more people who report, with more complete information, the more it informs actions that can be taken, which include monitoring, product review, warning and safety alerts issued, product recall.
- There are multiple ways to find out if a product has been recalled.
 - The product manufacturer will notify purchasers through the warranty cards completed and sent to them.
 - The product distributor can post notices in their place of business, send purchasers information directly by mail, email or text.
 - Health Canada's website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/report-health-safety-concern.html>.
- Be wary of buying, accepting, sharing, or disposing of second-hand products. While many second-hand consumer products are safe to buy and use, there are a few tips to follow when doing so. Check that the product is in good condition with no broken or missing parts. Check for labels that will tell you what standard the product meets (if applicable), the expiry date of the product or when it was manufactured. Check that the product has not been recalled. For some products, knowing the history of the product is important. For example, knowing whether a car seat has been in a crash is important as it may impact the way the car seat functions in future crashes.
- Be careful using after-market add-ons. For products that have a standard or a regulation, they are tested in original condition, meaning that they are not tested with any after-market products that may affect the way the product

functions. For example, car seat products that can be used, e.g., fit over the straps, are not recommended.

- Shopping online and cross-border purchases – Online shopping is easy and both online shopping and cross-border shopping allows access to a wide range of products. However, not all products sold online or in other countries meet Canadian standards, or they may have been banned or recalled. Without seeing the product, it is difficult to assess the quality. To avoid safety issues, before buying, check the product hasn't been recalled or is banned for sale in Canada, check for product warnings and age recommendations, know who you're buying from and choose reputable sellers that you'll be able to reach out to if there is a concern with the product. Health Canada has more information at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/buying-second-hand-products.html>

Health Canada databases on consumer products and injuries

Health Infobase Canada

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/?category=All+injuries+and+death>

Dashboard of reports received about consumer products and cosmetics

<https://health-infobase.canada.ca/consumer-product-safety/reports-dashboard/>

For more information, visit
parachute.ca/safekidsweek