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FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE CHILD SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

One of the dimensions of safety is to prevent accidental injuries to children below the age of 5 years. According to the International Association for Child Safety (IAFCS) USA, children are most prone to accidents till 5 years. Therefore, it is mandatory for the school management to keep children under the age of five safe. The following five simple precautions would help schools reduce the risk of accidents.

1 Keep poisonous liquids under lock

Cleaning agents should be kept away from the reach of children. For children a white colour liquid means milk. The child cannot read the bottle labels nor understand the toxic chemicals in the bottle and may drink. Cleaning agents should be kept under lock and key or on higher cabinets.

2 Look out for choking hazard

A choking hazard is any object that could be caught in a child's throat blocking the airway and making it difficult or impossible to breathe. Toys, beads, food items, button batteries and many other small objects are a choking hazard to young children.

The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) recommends that children aged 5 and younger should not be given hard candies or gum, and that raw fruits and vegetables be cut into small pieces when they are fed to young children. Children should be supervised while eating, and should never run, walk, play or lie down with food in their mouth.

Other choking hazards:

- Latex balloons
- Coins
- Marbles
- Toys with small parts
- Toys that can be compressed to fit entirely into a child's mouth
- Pen or marker caps
- Small balls
- Button batteries
- Hair clips and beads

3 Install door guards to prevent finger pinching

It is common to hear of accidents where the finger of a child has been pinched or cut off by the school door. It could either happen at the hinge side of the door or at the side of the handle. Not only is it extremely painful but a child may lose a finger too.

The school should install finger guards on the hinge side of the door. Using simple strong hooks (as shown in the image) at a height of 5 feet behind the door will reduce the risk of the door slamming due of wind or children banging the door as they exit.

4 Improve playground safety

There should be different playing zones for pre-primary and primary children. The surface should be rubberised and playing equipments should be selected carefully. Young kids should always be supervised by adults on the playground.

5 Train staff in first-aid and CPR

Accidents come unannounced. The school teachers should be first aid and CPR certified. In case an accident occurs, there should be a pre- set protocol in place and the accident should be noted down in a log book.

Safe Baby is India's first business focused on child safety, established in 2011. Safe Baby has worked with India's leading playschools, daycares and schools. Safe Baby offers child proofing safety audits and workshops on preventing accidents and first aid. ■

