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Easter mishaps

Going away this holiday break with the kids? Have a safe one, writes KATIE HAMPSON.

There is a certain anything-goes frivolity to Easter. As comedian Bill Hicks once observed, we commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus by telling our children that a giant bunny rabbit left chocolate eggs in the night.

Christmas, with all its rigidity and formality, doesn't have quite the same sense of freedom and fun as the Easter holiday.

But as we relax over the four-day break, West Australians are being reminded not to let their guard down, particularly if small children are around, and to brush up on their first-aid skills.

"People often head out camping and do outdoor activities at Easter because a few months ago it was too hot and in another couple of months it will be too cold and wet and this is why we remind people to be careful because certain injuries increase with outdoor activities," explains Rondei Dancer, St John Ambulance WA first-aid training team leader.

"When people go away camping, it's often near water such as the river or ocean and there is the risk of drowning as well as bites and stings. If children go under water you won't hear them splashing around violently like in the movies. It usually happens silently. People also travel a reasonable

distance and fatigue is a factor. We usually see an increase in road accidents. We also see an increase in burrs from camping and barbecue use. Slips and trips are also happening because we've had some rain early on and people aren't used to it."

A lesser known fact is back injuries are not uncommon either. Ms Dancer says people in a rush to hit the road load heavy suitcases and equipment into vehicles and forget to use good manual handling positions and techniques. "This is something we remember to do in the workplace but forget when we are in a hurry to heading off on holiday," she adds.

"People also think they can take on a DIY project too because of the extra time off but some of us are not as handy as we think and we don't take the precautions and that's when we see the falls from ladders, power tool accidents and lacerations from whipper snippers because people whipper snip the lawn in thongs.

"Even if they don't need an ambulance, they certainly need some first-aid attention because cuts that aren't managed can become infected and affect your work and lifestyle."

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PERTH RADIOLOGICAL CLINIC

Have a safe celebration

Easter can be an accident-prone time for kids, so adults are reminded not to let their guard down

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Ms Dancer says heading off-road for activities, or camping in remote locations, means help in an emergency may not be immediately available.

"Activities such as horse riding, four-wheel-driving, riding motorcycles and beach buggies all increase and these accidents — generally spinal and head injuries — can happen in areas that are not easy to get to for our paramedics."

She recommends having radio communication or a mobile phone handy and, when heading

off-the-beaten track or boating, a satellite phone or EPIRB.

"Having some form of first-aid training and a first-aid kit so that somebody with you knows what to do until emergency services get there can make a massive difference to the outcome for the person.

"We don't want to ruin the holiday spirit but being prepared allows you to get help quickly if you need it because you don't want to delay contact with emergency services."

According to Scott Phillips, chief executive of Kidsafe WA, about 50 children every day present to Princess Margaret Hospital's emergency department. "This does not include visits to other hospitals and clinics.

Among the 8000 WA children hospitalised every year for an injury, 27 die. The majority are unintentional injuries with children under five at greatest risk.

In this age group, drowning — mostly in home swimming pools — is the most common cause of injury-related death. Falls are the reason for one third of hospitalisations.



Pictures: Getty Images

Mr Phillips says many accidents happen because children cannot assess risks for themselves and rely heavily on close adult supervision to keep safe.

"The things we talk about around holidays such as Easter is the safe celebration," he explains.

"The biggest killer is drowning and road. The biggest injury factor is falls in the under-four age group, in their own home."

He says farmstays are popular at Easter and he urges parents to remember they are actually entering a workplace.

"If children visit a farm their play area needs to be separated from work areas or it can be quite dangerous where tractors and diggers are backing up," he explains.

"Our biggest issue at the

moment is quad bikes. They aren't really for children and if a quad bike tips over on to them you would not be able to lift it off them and it will crush.

"Often it doesn't happen right in front of people because kids ride off and people don't find them quick enough.

"The others are dams and animal bites. The problem with dams is they are not fenced because they are there for the animals to drink from.

"It's important that a responsible adult is supervising and it's not left to young teenagers, for example, because they don't make the right decisions either.

"What happens on these types of weekends is we relax and supervision can drop off. Little ones are very vulnerable then because they aren't able to make the right decisions."

It's really important that a responsible adult is supervising and it's not left to young teenagers, for example, because they don't make the right decisions either.

Scott Phillips

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Burns and scalds

1. Remove any nappies or wet clothes
2. Immediately apply cool running water for 20 minutes
3. Keep the child warm to prevent them from going into shock
4. See a doctor if the burn or scald is on the face, hands, feet, genitals or buttocks, if it is larger than a 20 cent coin or blistered
5. In an emergency, phone 000 for an ambulance. Never use ice, oils, butters, ointments or creams.

Spinal injury

- Unconscious patient**
- Follow DRABCDC.
 - Place unconscious patient in recovery position supporting neck and spine in a neutral position at all times to prevent twisting or bending movements.
 - Maintain a clear and open airway.
 - If ambulance is delayed, apply a cervical collar (only if trained to do so), to minimise neck movement.
 - Ensure an ambulance has been called.

Conscious patient

- Follow DRABCDC.
- Calm the patient and loosen tight clothing.
- Do not move the patient unless in danger.
- Support head, neck and spine in a neutral position at all times to prevent twisting or bending movements.
- If ambulance is delayed, apply a cervical collar (only if trained to do so), to minimise neck movement.
- Ensure an ambulance has been called.
- Remember, if the patient is unconscious after a head injury, always suspect a spinal injury.

Stings

- Bees, European wasps, ants, ticks, scorpions and centipedes require an Icepack over the bite.
 - Seek medical attention if necessary.
 - Blue-bottle (Pacific man-o-war), jellyfish, bullout fish, catfish, crown-of-thorns starfish, stingray, stonefish and non-tropical minor jellyfish require the patient's stung limb to be placed in hot water (as hot as you can tolerate). Ensure an ambulance has been called.
 - Box, tukanidji, jimbie jellyfish, sea anemones and tropical marine stings require flooding the stung area with vinegar for at least 30 seconds. If vinegar is not available, flick tentacles off with a stick or gloved fingers and call an ambulance.
- SOURCE: ST JOHN AMBULANCE

Easter accidents in focus

KATIE HAMPSON takes a look at common injuries doctors see in children over the holiday period – and reveals what to do if it happens to your little one.

FARMSTAYS

As well as being a family home, it's important to remember a farm is also a workplace where there can be hazards to children, says Kidsafe WA chief executive Scott Phillips.

There are usually different bodies of water that are unfenced such as dams, tanks, creeks, rivers, pools and troughs. Given children are naturally inquisitive, it's best to remove ladders from water tanks and make sure all wells and troughs are fitted with lids or mesh. Supervise your child at all times and ensure there is a dedicated, securely fenced play area away from water and other hazards.

Store all farm chemicals in a lockable shed away from the family home and children's play areas.

And remember, animals can be unpredictable just like children. Horses are a common risk to children on farms, along with cows, chickens, and pigs.

Ensure animal pens and all stockyards are inaccessible to little ones. Hold children close to you when there are moving vehicles, keep them well away from farm machinery and never allow children to ride in the back of a ute or children under 16 to jump on a quad bike.

CAMPING

Burns and scalds are a significant problem in WA with almost 500 children a year treated for a burn or scald at the emergency department of PMH. More than half the children admitted are under five.

Common causes of burns and scalds to children are heaters and fires and lack of supervision around them. Young children are mobile but lack the skills to assess danger. Severe burns and scalds can be extremely devastating to a child and their family, often requiring multiple hospital visits and leaving lifelong scarring. Most of these injuries are preventable.

THE CELEBRATIONS

"Driveaway safety is important at this time because you will be visiting places with lots of cars or you will be around home where there are lots more cars than usual because family and friends are coming and going," Scott Phillips says.

"We say people need to separate play areas from driveways. There is a saying that the cameras in cars just allow you to see the moment you hit the child. People don't usually hit a stationary child – children move in front of cars very quickly."

The statistics show tragically one child, often a toddler, is run over in the driveway every week in Australia.

The vehicle is often being driven by a parent, relative or friend. The vehicle is usually only moving slowly, however, a

slow-moving vehicle reversing down a driveway can trap a child, causing fatal crush injuries. Even if your car has parking sensors or a video camera fitted, you may not notice a small child until it is too late to stop. In the time it takes for the driver to say goodbye and start the car, a child can move from a "safe" position, on to the driveway and into the path of the vehicle.

Children who survive these scenarios are often left with severe long-term injuries.

Remember to supervise and separate. Children are curious and move surprisingly fast and can run into the path of vehicles without warning.

Easter guide for parents:

- 1 Closely supervise children around driveways and separate them from where cars are parked during family celebrations. Scooters, bikes and skateboards can be used more safely at the local park.
- 2 Active supervision within arm's reach is required around water, whether that is the family swimming pool or lakes, rivers and beaches where you are on holiday.
- 3 All children should be seated in the correct child car restraint when travelling and ensure plenty of drinks are available for long trips. Small bodies dehydrate quickly.
- 4 If visiting a farm remember quad bikes, farm machinery, dams and animals can pose serious injury risks to children.
- 5 While camping or holidaying, supervise around heaters and open fires. Make sure hot coals are covered after use.

SOURCE: KIDSAFE WA.
FOR MORE SAFETY TIPS
VISIT KIDSAFEWA.COM.AU

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Scott Phillips

Snapshot: Injuries in children in WA over the past five Easter holidays

Fall 362
Blunt force 239
Other cause 142
Cut or pierced 63
Pedestrian 57
Bite or sting 55
Pedal cyclist 38
Burn or scald 24
Transport event 18
Physical overexertion 16
Poisoning 15
Threat to breathing 13



Total 1042
SOURCE: KIDSAFE WA

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