

Each Year, More Than 20,000 Children Are Injured by Shopping Carts

Simple safety tips can keep shopping trips from ending in the Emergency Room

[KALAMAZOO] – Falls from shopping carts are among the leading causes of head injuries in young children, with 1- and 2-year-olds having the highest incidents of shopping cart-related injuries. While the shopping cart might seem like the safest place for a child in the store, simple safety precautions are necessary to ensure that a quick trip for groceries does not end in injury.

“In addition to head and brain injuries, children visit the emergency room with cuts, bruises, and even broken limbs from shopping carts,” said Deb Carpenter, coordinator of Safe Kids Kalamazoo County and Childhood Injury Prevention at The Children’s Hospital at Bronson. “Just because a child is seated in a shopping cart does not mean you can assume they’re safe. There are several safer alternatives to placing a child in a cart. But if a child must sit in a shopping cart, always keep one eye on your child and one hand on the cart.”

It is estimated that more than 20,000 children under age 5 are injured by shopping carts each year. Falls are the most common cause of shopping-cart related injury in children of this age group, accounting for 83 percent of all injuries. Tip-overs and children colliding with the shopping cart are other causes of injury.

Top 5 ways to avoid shopping-cart injuries:

1. Never leave your child unattended in a shopping cart and stay close to the cart at all times.
2. If you are placing your child in the shopping cart seat, always use a harness or the safety belt provided to restrain your child. If you see a shopping cart missing a seat belt or the seat belt is broken, select another shopping cart with a working seat belt, and tell the store manager so a replacement can be installed.
3. Never place your own infant carrier on top of a shopping cart. Use the infant seats, provided by the store, which are permanently attached and made part of the shopping cart.
4. Do not let your child ride in the cart basket, under the basket, on the sides or front of the cart.
5. Use the shopping carts that have a wheeled child carrier that is permanently attached and made part of the shopping cart. Some of these models look like cars or benches attached to the shopping cart.

“Safety precautions are important whenever a child is riding in a shopping cart, but especially for children ages 3 and under,” added Carpenter.

The American Society for Testing and Materials International has created a voluntary standard for shopping carts, which states that all shopping carts must have a warning label depicting safety messages, and that shopping carts with a child seating area must have adjustable child restraint systems with child-resistant buckles or closures. This standard is intended to cover children ages 6 months to 4 years, and who weigh 15 to 35 pounds.

The height, weight, center of gravity and wheel base dimensions of shopping carts vary significantly. Some carts have a high center of gravity and a narrow wheel base making them top heavy when loaded and therefore easy to tip over. Due to this design flaw in many existing shopping carts and the difficulty of evaluating a cart’s safety simply by looking at it, parents and caregivers should consider alternatives to placing their child in a shopping cart until all carts are redesigned to prevent injury.

- Use carts with safer designs that allow children to ride closer to the ground (i.e. in a small model car in front of the cart);
- Place children in a stroller, wagon or frontpack.
- Ask you older child to walk and compliment him or her for behaving and staying close to you.

Safe Kids Kalamazoo County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Kalamazoo County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Kalamazoo County was founded in 1989 and is led by The Children’s Hospital at Bronson.

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