



# Focus on...

## Accidents in the home – Injuries from unsecured furniture falling

- Most accidents happen between late afternoon and early evening, in the summer, during school holidays and at weekends.
- Factors such as stress, death in the family, chronic illness, homelessness or moving home increase the likelihood of a child having an accident.
- Some happen when the usual routine is changed or when people are in a hurry.
- Distractions and inadequate supervision are often the cause of accidents.
- Poor housing and overcrowded conditions lead to increased numbers of accidents.
- Some accidents are caused by lack of familiarity with surroundings, for example, when visiting friends or relatives, or in holiday accommodation.
- Under-5s are particularly at risk of being injured in home accidents.

### Common myths

**The cupboard is heavy, it will not tip over-** The cupboard might be heavy to move. However, it is still a hazard for a young child. When a child opens the drawers and climbs on them, even a heavy cupboard or other type of furniture can fall on a child. When the drawers are opened, the centre of gravity changes and the furniture could tip over.

**We do not need to anchor the furniture in our bedroom because our children do not play in our room-** Tip-over injuries can happen very quickly. Children may wander into a room when you do not expect it, even under close supervision. Anchor the furniture in all rooms, not just the nursery or playroom. Bookcases and cupboards as short as 27 or 28 inches have fallen over and caused fatality.

**Older children know not to climb -** Children do not think about a bookcase or cupboard being something that could harm them. They climb to reach something they want on the top of the furniture. Often, drawers are used like a ladder so the child can reach an item that is too high for them. Even if you have explained that climbing is dangerous to your toddler or pre-schooler, a parent should not trust that a curious child will remember their safety lesson.

**Recent traumatic incident in Lancashire –** An unsecured marble fireplace collapsed after its bottom section 'snapped' resulting in it falling onto a two-year-old little boy as he as he danced with his cousin in the living room at home. He sustained a significant head injury and sadly died because of this.

- Purchase low-set furniture or furniture with sturdy, stable and broad bases.
- Look for furniture that comes with safety information or equipment for anchoring it to the walls.
- Test the furniture in the shop – make sure it is stable. Pull out top drawers of a chest of drawers and apply a little pressure; make sure the drawers do not fall out easily.
- Attach, mount, bolt or otherwise secure furniture to walls and floors.
- Do not put heavy items on top shelves of bookcases. Put locking devices on all drawers to prevent children opening them and using them as steps.
- Place televisions at the back of cabinets or secure them to the wall.
- Discourage small children from climbing on furniture. Do not place unstable furniture near where children play.
- Do not put tempting items e.g. toys on top of furniture that encourage children to climb up and reach.

