



Top 10 Tips for Healthier, Safer Children

As determined by the Franklin County Child Fatality Review



Teresa C. Long, MD, MPH
Health Commissioner

240 Parsons Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 645-6447
www.publichealth.columbus.gov

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INTRODUCTION

The birth of a child is perhaps the most exciting and joyful time in the life of a parent. It is also a time filled with many questions about how to keep your child healthy and safe. This booklet is designed to help parents to identify threats to the well-being of their children and to provide the necessary information and resources, so that they can anticipate threats and know what to do to prevent them. The top 10 issues discussed in this booklet were determined by the work of the Franklin County Child Fatality Review (FCCFR) and are based on data from 2008, but the themes are consistent from year to year.

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1 GET EARLY PRENATAL CARE

By receiving early care, your baby has the best chance of being born healthy. Babies born to mothers who don't get prenatal care are three times more likely to be born with a low birth weight and five times more likely to die than babies born to mothers who receive prenatal care. In Franklin County, low birth weight/prematurity is the leading cause of death for infants. Without enough prenatal care, bad outcomes, such as infant death, are more likely to occur. To make sure you get early prenatal care:

- See a doctor about care before you become pregnant.
- See a doctor as soon as you think you might be pregnant.
- See the doctor regularly before and after the baby is born.

If you are uninsured or on Medicaid, the Pregnancy Care Connection can help connect you with care and link you to services. For more information or to make an appointment, call 614-227-9866 (M - F 8:30am – 4:30pm).

All women can go to the Columbus Public Health Women's Health Centers for pregnancy/obstetrical and gynecology services. Insurance including Medicaid is accepted, fees are based on income, and care will be given even if you are unable to pay. Hours are by appointment at:

Women's Health Center East
240 Parsons Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-645-6424 (obstetrics)
614-645-1850 (gynecology)



2 MAKE SURE YOUR INFANT SLEEPS SAFELY

Sleep-related deaths, including Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), are the second leading cause of death for children in Franklin County under one year of age. Making sure where your child sleeps is safe can reduce the risk of sleep-related death. For safe sleep:

- Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, even for naps.
- Place your baby on a firm sleep surface such as a safety-approved crib mattress; never on a full-size mattress, couch, pillows, or other soft surfaces.
- Don't put soft objects, toys, or loose bedding in your baby's sleep area.
- No smoking around your baby.
- Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep.
- Use a clean, dry pacifier when putting your baby down to sleep.
- Make sure your baby doesn't get too hot and dress your baby in light sleep clothing.

More information on infant safe sleep can be found through the following organizations:

- National Institute of Child and Human Development: <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/>
- Sudden Infant Death Network of Ohio: <http://www.sidsohio.org/>
- Council on Healthy Mothers and Babies: <http://www.healthymothersandbabies.org/sids.htm>
- CJ Foundation for SIDS: <http://www.cjsids.com/>
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: 1-800-635-CPSC, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/cribsafe.html>



3 KEEP YOUR CHILD AWAY FROM TOBACCO SMOKE

Secondhand smoke contains over 250 chemicals well known to be bad for health. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke breathe many of the same poisons as smokers. Since their bodies are growing, infants and children are more likely to be harmed by these poisons than adults. Babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy or who are exposed to secondhand smoke after birth have weaker lungs and are more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In Franklin County, 50% of children who died of SIDS had mothers who smoked during pregnancy and 25% were exposed to secondhand smoke after birth. Secondhand smoke also causes infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia as well as coughing, phlegm, wheezing, and breathlessness. It causes children with asthma to have severe attacks more often and increases a child's risk for ear infections. To keep your children away from tobacco smoke:

- If you smoke, consider quitting even before you might become pregnant or have a child.
- If you are pregnant, do not smoke or expose yourself to secondhand smoke.
- Do not smoke anywhere near your child, including a different room within the same home.
- Be aware of other caregivers who might smoke (grandparents, babysitters, etc.) and ask that they not smoke around your child.

Information about programs to help smokers quit can be found through:

- Ohio Tobacco Quit Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- American Legacy Great Start Quit Line: 1-866-66-START
- American Cancer Society: 1-800-ACS-2345
- American Lung Association: 1-800-LUNG-USA, <http://www.lungusa.org>
- The National Partnership for Smoke-free Families: <http://www.smokefreefamilies.tobacco-cessation.org>



4 USE A CAR SEAT AND MAKE SURE IT'S INSTALLED CORRECTLY

The most important thing you can do to protect your child in the car is to buckle them up properly. When used correctly, child safety seats greatly reduce your child's risk of death and injury. However, about 89-90% of car seats used in Franklin County are installed incorrectly. To make sure your child is safe in the car:

- All children under the age of 13 should ride in the back seat.
- Infants should be in a rear-facing car seat until at least age 1 and 20 pounds. Use your rear-facing car seat longer if it has higher rear-facing weight and height limits. Toddlers are more than five times safer if they remain in rear-facing car seat until the age of two.
- Children over 1 year and between 20 and 40 pounds can be in forward-facing car seats.
- Children ages 4 to 8 should be in a booster seat used with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt every time they ride.
- Ohio law requires all children to ride in a booster seat until they are 8 years old or 4' 9" tall.
- Children over 4' 9" tall usually fit correctly in lap and shoulder belts. When the child is sitting all the way back, the lap belt should fit across the child's hips and the shoulder belt should cross the center of the shoulder. Do not let your child put the shoulder belt behind their back or under their arm.
- Read your child safety seat instruction manual and vehicle owner's manual carefully for proper installation.
- Have the installation of your child's safety seat checked by a certified child passenger safety technician.
- Never use car seats purchased from yard sales, secondhand stores or flea markets.

To find a safety seat check station near you, call the Columbus Public Health Car Seat Hotline at (614) 645-7748 or visit the website at <http://www.publichealth.columbus.gov/childhood-injury-prevention.aspx>.



5 SAFELY MEDICATE YOUR CHILD

When giving your child medication, giving it properly is very important. If drugs are given incorrectly they may not work or cause harm. In Franklin County, 6% of child deaths due to injury were the result of poisoning. To avoid medication poisoning:

- Always read labels, follow directions, and give medicines to children based on their weights and ages.
- Only use dispensers packaged with children’s medications.
- Don’t give children under 4 years old any over-the-counter drugs without checking with a doctor first.
- Store medications locked out of children’s reach and sight.
- Tell grandparents and other caretakers about avoiding medication poisoning.
- Keep the toll-free nationwide poison control center number (1-800-222-1222) and local emergency numbers (911) near every telephone.
- Keep activated charcoal on hand to be used only on the advice of the poison control center or a physician.

Poison control centers offer fast, free, confidential help in English and Spanish. Most poisonings are taken care of over the phone. The number works from anywhere in the United States 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you suspect poisoning and a child is choking, collapses, can’t breathe, or is having a seizure, call 911. Otherwise, take the product to the phone and call the poison control hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

For more information, visit the Safe Kids Coalition website at <http://www.usa.safekids.org>.



6 WATCH YOUR CHILD AROUND WATER

The majority of drownings occur in home swimming pools. Most children who drown in swimming pools were last seen in the home, had been out of sight for less than five minutes, and were in the care of one or both parents at the time of the drowning. However, it is important to know that children can also drown in as little as 1 inch of water. Therefore, they are at risk of drowning in wading pools, bathtubs, buckets, diaper pails, toilets, spas, and hot tubs. In Franklin County, 2% of child deaths due to injury were caused by drowning. To keep your child safe around water:

- Never take your eyes off your child or leave them alone in the pool or bath, even for a minute.
- Stay alert and avoid distractions, such as reading or talking on the phone.
- Children should wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets. Don't rely on bathtub rings, "water wings," or other devices to keep children afloat.
- Learn child CPR and keep life-saving equipment by the pool.
- Begin swimming lessons after age 4.
- Teach children how to tread water, float, and get out of the pool.
- Teach children to stay away from pool and hot tub drains and tie back long hair to keep it from getting caught.
- Install toilet locks.

In case of emergency, dial 911. For more information, visit:

- Safe Kids Coalition: <http://www.usa.safekids.org>
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: 1-800-635-CPSC, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/chdrown.html>



7 USE SMOKE DETECTORS AND HAVE A FAMILY FIRE ESCAPE PLAN

A fire can burn up a house in only 2 minutes. In Franklin County, 12% of child deaths due to injury resulted from fire. To protect your child and yourself from a fire:

- Use smoke detectors. Have enough smoke detectors that at least one can be installed on every level of a home. Every bedroom should have a smoke detector installed outside of it on the hall ceiling.
- Test your smoke detectors twice a year and replace weak or dead batteries immediately.
- Make sure everyone in the home knows what the smoke alarm sounds like and what it means.
- Create a fire escape plan by finding two ways out of each room in the home, especially bedrooms and agree on a safe meeting place outside.
- Practice your fire escape route and crawling on the ground to be below smoke.
- Sleep with bedroom doors closed.
- Teach your child not to be afraid of firefighters.
- Teach your child how to call 911, when it is the right time to call, who will respond, and to call from a neighbor's house during a fire. Also, make sure your child knows their address.
- Teach children not to play with matches, lighters, candles, etc.

In case of emergency, dial 911. For more information on fire safety, visit:

- The Central Ohio Fire Museum: 260 N. 4th St., Columbus, OH 43215
Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
(614) 464-4099, email: cofmuseum@aol.com
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:
1-800-635-CPSC, http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/fire_sfy.html

If you need a smoke detector, visit your local fire station, or call Columbus Division of Fire Headquarters at (614) 645-7377.



8 KNOW HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT BABYSITTER

It is important that everyone who cares for your child knows how to keep them safe. When choosing someone to care for your child, questions to consider include:

- Does the caregiver know about infant safe sleep?
- Does the caregiver know about shaken baby syndrome?
- Does the caregiver know CPR?
- Does the caregiver smoke around your child?
- How many other children are being cared for?
- Does the caregiver know how to correctly give any medication your child might be on?
- Does the caregiver know about your child's allergies or other medical concerns?
- Does your caregiver know the correct phone numbers in case of an emergency and your address if they watch your child in your home?

For more information, visit the Action for Children website at <http://www.actionforchildren.org>.



9 MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD DOESN'T HAVE ACCESS TO FIREARMS

All children are at risk for accidental firearm injury. Parents often do not understand a child's ability to gain access to and fire a gun, to distinguish between real and toy guns, to make good judgments about handling a gun, and to always follow gun safety rules. If you have children in the home, any gun could be a danger to them. In Franklin County, firearms and weapons are a leading cause of death. To prevent your child from being injured by a gun:

- Store firearms unloaded, locked and out of reach of children.
- Store ammunition in a separate, locked location.
- Use quality gun locks, lock boxes, or gun safes on every firearm.
- Keep gun storage keys and lock combinations hidden in a separate location.
- Talk to your child about the dangers of guns.
- Teach children never to touch or play with a gun.
- Teach children to tell an adult if they find a gun or call 911 if no adult is present.
- Check with neighbors, friends, relatives, or adults in any other homes where children visit to make sure safe storage practices are followed if firearms are in the home.

For more information on gun safety, visit the Safe Kids Coalition website at <http://www.usa.safekids.org>.



10 KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE

Parents should know the warning signs of suicide and should talk to their child if they suspect that he or she is thinking about suicide and get professional help. Warning signs include:

- Depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Change in appetite or weight
- Change in sleeping patterns
- Recent risk-taking behavior
- Unexpected rage or anger
- Feelings of worthlessness, self-reproach, or guilt
- Lessened ability to think or concentrate, slowed thinking, or indecisiveness
- Thoughts of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead
- Making a plan (giving away prized possessions and obtaining a means of killing oneself)

More information about suicide can be found through the following organizations:

- Suicide Hotline: (614) 221-5445, <http://www.callthehotline.com>
- Teen Hotline: (614) 294-3300
- Suicide Prevention Services: (614) 299-6600 ext. 2073
- North Central Mental Health Services: (614) 299-6600
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <http://www.afsp.org>
- National Strategy for Suicide Prevention: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention/default.asp>
- Suicide Prevention Action Network USA: <http://www.spanusa.org>



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FRANKLIN COUNTY CHILD FATALITY REVIEW

The Franklin County Child Fatality Review (FCCFR), managed by Columbus Public Health, is a state-mandated program which reviews the deaths of all children under 18 years of age who live in Franklin County. Through the study of these deaths, a better understanding of risk factors that contribute to poor health, injury, disability, and death in children is achieved. Each year in Franklin County, the lives of over 200 children are lost. Many of these deaths are preventable. These ten tips are based on 2008 data from the FCCFR and are designed to highlight recurring issues parents should be aware of that threaten the lives of their children. More information about the FCCFR can be found online at <http://www.publichealth.columbus.gov/child-fatality-review.aspx>.

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