



Boston Health Notes

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& Mayor Thomas M. Menino*

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Kids Can't Fly: Protect Your Child from Window Falls

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With the arrival of hot summer weather, families across Boston will open their windows to let in a cool breeze. When there are small children in the home, an open window can be dangerous. Kids will explore everywhere imaginable, and they are fast. It only takes a minute for a child to climb onto furniture located next to an open window. Every year children playing near unprotected windows are hurt from serious falls. This year two young children have fallen from windows in Boston neighborhoods.

One Step Ahead

As parents and caregivers, we can protect our children from window falls. The best way to prevent all kinds of injury to children is to keep an eye on them. Supervision is important, and sometimes a babysitter or an older sibling will not recognize the possible danger of an open window. Adults should be aware that window falls, particularly in apartments and large urban areas, can lead to severe injuries and are often fatal. At the site of the fall in Hyde Park this month, the child fell from a fourth floor window. Improving the safety of the home by securing the windows can prevent these tragedies.

Safety Tips

1. Lock all unopened doors and windows.
2. Move chairs, cribs, beds, and anything a child can climb away from windows.
3. Open windows from the top if possible.
4. Install window safety guards.

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What are window safety guards?

Window safety guards are aluminum or steel bars with four-inch spacing that are installed in the bottom half of a window. There are two kinds of window guards: those that are permanently installed and those that have a hidden release feature which allows escape in the case of an emergency. Every room should have one window or fire escape that is not covered by a permanently installed guard.

Who needs window guards?

Window guards are recommended for windows on the second story and above, or on any floor that is 10 feet above ground. Homes with children under age seven should install guards. Remember that window screens are designed to keep bugs out but are not strong enough to stop a child from falling.

Where are window guards available?

Many local hardware stores and home improvement stores carry window guards.

Boston residents and property owners can purchase low-cost window guards at Boston Building Materials Co-op, located at 100 Terrace St. Roxbury, MA 02120. (617) 442-2262.

For more information or educational materials, contact the Boston Public Health Commission's Childhood Injury Prevention Program at 617-534-5197 or visit www.bphc.org/kidscantfly.

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