



WELLNEWS

June 2010

Home Sweet Injury-Free Home

How to avoid and treat common household injuries

You're slicing an onion when you accidentally miss the vegetable and cut your finger. Your child is running downstairs when he trips and splits open his lip. Your elderly mother slips on the ice and is unable to walk. You're not a doctor, and you haven't taken a first-aid course since college. So what's an average Jane (or Joe) to do? First things first: Don't panic. Just read on.

When it comes to unexpected household injuries-falls, lacerations, chest pain, bee stings, burns, broken bones, ingestion of dangerous substances-what you have on hand could mean the difference between life and death. Unfortunately, countless people are involved in accidents-in the comfort of their own homes-each year. Frighteningly, most of these people don't know how to best treat the victims or themselves. Until now. We spoke to emergency room doctor Mitchell Pollack of John T. Mather Memorial Hospital in Port Jefferson, N.Y., who gave us advice on preventing and treating the most common household injuries.

I've Fallen and I Can't Get Up

Falls, which can lead to wrist injuries (by putting your arm down to brace yourself), hip fractures or worse, are one of the most frequent home accidents. If there are seniors in the house, be prepared. "Elderly people, especially those on blood pressure

medication, tend to get lightheaded and fall if they get up too quickly," Pollack says. "Try not to leave things on the floor. Install railings for them to hold on to-especially in the bathroom, which is a common place for falls."

Pollack recommends stocking up on ice packs for bumps, bruises and other superficial injuries that result from spills.

The First Cut Is the Deepest

Household lacerations-from knives or other sharp objects-also are extremely common. The best way to control bleeding is to apply direct pressure. "You don't need anything fancy," Pollack says. "A clean towel is adequate, though in some cases you have to hold it there for several minutes to stop the bleeding." If the laceration is on an extremity (arm, leg), he recommends elevating the body part above heart level to decrease bleeding.

Pollack cautions not to apply a tourniquet unless the bleeding can't be controlled by local pressure. If applied incorrectly, "a tourniquet has potential to damage a nerve or the skin," Pollack says.

Burning Questions

In the case of a first-degree burn (redness of the skin) or a second-degree burn (blistering), soak clean towels in cool water and apply to the damaged skin. (Make sure the water is cool, but not ice cold. Freezing water



could worsen the damage.) "A cool soak is basically for comfort," Pollack says. It also helps to have an ointment or spray that contains a local anesthetic and is normally used for sunburn, such as Solarcaine, in the medicine cabinet.

Bad Gulp

In the case of accidental ingestions, everyone should have the number for their poison control center posted on the phone. You may have heard of syrup of ipecac, but Pollack and the American Academy of Pediatrics warn against it. "It's not particularly effective," Pollack says. "It causes vomiting, but there's quite a delay. It can take 30 minutes or more. It should be given only if you become aware of the ingestion very shortly afterwards."

Instead of waiting for ingestion, prevent it by making sure all medications are out of your child's reach. And dial poison control immediately after something dangerous has been swallowed. Time is critical.



A partnership of Ministry Health Care and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare

www.affinityhealth.org

Save Your Sight



This time of year, many people undertake home repair, yard cleanup and sports. Be sure to protect your eyes during these activities. A quarter of a million Americans suffer eye injuries annually, and more than half of these injuries occur in the home.

Wear safety glasses (marked with "ANSI Z87.1" on the lens or frame) during remodeling and yard projects, even while mowing the lawn. Stones and debris sent flying can damage eyes.

When outdoors, wear sunglasses or goggles that block 99 percent of ultraviolet A and B radiation. The sun's rays can harm the eyes or even cause photokeratitis—comparable to sunburning the eyeball.

Closely supervise craft projects. Kids' creative use of household items like coat hangers, glue and pencils puts them at a greater risk of eye injury.

Leave the fireworks to the professionals. Every year, fireworks accidents account for 2,400 eye injuries, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

The Eyes Have It

The severity and duration of an eye injury vary by cause. To request free fact sheets on treating and preventing eye injuries, visit preventblindness.org/safety.

Healthy Family Activities



Be sure to check out this month's healthy family activities in your community at: <http://search.active.com/?tab=events>

When to Pick Up the Phone and Dial 9-1-1

When should you call for an ambulance? Here are four definite instances:



1. Your kids are acting (unusually) strange. "If children become uncharacteristically lethargic, they may have ingested something suspicious," Pollack says. "Generally there's some clue—a bottle that's knocked over, pills on the floor. You may even see something around the child's mouth."
2. Someone has taken a bad spill-on ice, down a flight of steps or from a height. "If someone has fallen and appears to be severely injured, especially if there's a head, back or neck injury, don't try to move the victim," Pollack says. "It also depends on the surface one has fallen onto. Is it concrete?" Then call the professionals.
3. A laceration is grossly contaminated and/or bleeding profusely. "If there's a question of a foreign body or a problem controlling the bleeding, call 9-1-1," Pollack says. This can happen when you're doing yard work and handling dirty tools. "People also tend to underestimate puncture wounds of the foot," he says. "If a nail goes through your shoe, your wound is at high risk of developing an infection and can be difficult to deal with."
4. You have a third-degree burn. Third-degree burns are full-thickness burns, and most people need to be seen. "The skin appears white, and you might lose feeling in the area," Pollack says. "It takes a pretty severe accident to cause that, but if it happens, immediately call 9-1-1."

What's Your Poison?



The national Poison Help Line is 800-222-1222. To find the number of the poison center in your area, visit the American Association of Poison Control Centers at aapcc.org. Select "Find a Poison Center" and then plug in your zip code. Post the number by your telephone in case of emergency.

Raspberry Cheesecake Squares



INGREDIENTS

1 package sugar-free raspberry gelatin
1 cup boiling water
2 (8-ounce) packages of cream cheese, softened

DIRECTIONS

Sprinkle gelatin into the boiling water and stir until well-dissolved. In a bowl, beat the cream cheese until it is very creamy. With the mixer running, add the gelatin and mix until thoroughly combined. Pour into an 8-inch by 8-inch pan and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours.

Strawberry Fruit Salad with Orange-Mint Dressing



INGREDIENTS

8 c. lightly packed spinach leaves
1 pint strawberries, stemmed and halved
4 c. assorted melon chunks
1 ½ c. orange and grapefruit segments
1 8-oz. container plain nonfat yogurt
3 Tbsp. thawed orange juice concentrate
1 tsp. sugar

DIRECTIONS

Line platter or four individual plates with spinach. Top with fruits, dividing equally. Drizzle with dressing.

To make dressing, whisk one 8-ounce container plain nonfat yogurt, 3 tablespoons thawed orange juice concentrate and 1 teaspoon sugar in bowl. Mix in 3 tablespoons chopped mint.

Recipe from the American Dietetic Association:
www.eatright.org.