



Things to Think About!

Check it Out

By Karen Morgan

Need more information? The following links will help you find out more about this topic:



www.chp.edu/besafe/hshb/hshbintro.php

National Network for Child Care

www.nncc.org



www.nsc.org/issues/fallstop.htm

If you have a specific question that we can answer, please feel free to contact us anytime through the following email address...

snrproject@hotmail.com

Walkers, Leg Braces, and Home Safety

By Linda Jorgensen

Recently a family friend received her very first pair of leg braces. At 3 yrs. old she has already had multiple surgeries on her feet and ankles to correct congenital deformities present at birth. Unable to stand and support her own weight, balance, or walk she has been scooting on her hands and knees, or on her bottom, to navigate her environment.

After two recent surgeries she received new leg braces and a small, bright pink walker to assist her with her balance. "Jaycee" was ready to learn how to stand and, hopefully, walk on her own. After a physical therapy session where Jaycee and her Mom received instructions on how to use the new equipment she was sent home to practice standing in her walker.

A week later Jaycee returned to the therapy clinic where she is receiving physical therapy. She came in the door sporting a very colorful bandage over a small cut on her forehead and a black eye. "I got 5 stitches!", she proudly announced. Her Mother, on the other hand, was mortified.

When asked what happened her Mother explained that Jaycee, like most children, wanted to get walking right away. Instead of patiently standing she tried to walk on her own. "As she took her first steps forward she got tangled up in a wrinkle in the throw rug she was standing on. She tripped, landing on the floor with her walker coming down on top of her, causing the cut on her forehead and the black eye. We have learned a very important safety lesson at our house", she stated.

While Jaycee's first attempt at walking, and her subsequent stitches and black eye, will make a great family story to retell, the underlying safety issues at home cannot be ignored.

What can a parent do to make their home environment a safe one for their children learning how to adjust to and use their new equipment?

The following are a few suggestions...

...continued on page 2

Consult your therapist

Be sure to receive proper training in the use of your child's new walker and braces before trying them at home. Have the therapist clarify any questions you may have before you leave the clinic or office.

Once You Arrive Home: Do a Home Safety Walk Through

Before allowing your child to use their equipment get down on their level and see what obstacles may be in the way.

Supervise your child

- Children with poor muscle or excessive muscle tone and/or poor balance will take time to gain adequate skill with their new equipment.
- Stay with your child while practicing standing or walking.
- Ensure your child is walking in a well lit room especially in the evenings or on dark days.

Remove all obstacles from the floor

- Keeping floor surfaces clean and uncluttered will eliminate trip hazards for children just learning to maneuver.
- Remove throw rugs and tack down loose sections of carpet. Ensure all toys and small items are kept picked up.
- Keep the floor clean. Frequent sweeping will keep floors clear of small debris. Promptly clean up grease, water, or other spills.
- Push furniture closer to the wall clearing floor space in the center of the room.
- Push chairs under tables; remove coffee tables, footstools or other short items of furniture.
- Ensure telephone and electrical cords are tucked safely out of the way.

Block Low windows

- Place sofas or gates in front of windows with low sills to prevent falls into the windowpanes.

Close doors

- Close doors to any room you may not want your child to have access to. Bathrooms, bedrooms, etc.
- **BLOCK KITCHEN AREAS! WALKERS AND KITCHENS DON'T MIX!**

Gate Stairways

- Use safety gates at the tops and bottoms of stairs.
- Make sure all steps and landings are free of clutter.

Wood Stoves

- Block all fireplace hearths and wood stoves. Consider using a hearth baby gate.

Wall Corners

- Use padded corner guards to protect both your child and the wall corners against scrapes and falls.

"We've learned our lesson", Jaycee's Mom explains. "We have cleared out an area in our home where Jaycee can safely practice her walking and we never leave her unattended. She is adventurous and wants to take off. We'll be with her every minute until she can safely walk on her own. It's going to be a long process".

Bringing home a new walker and leg braces for the first time is an exciting event. Adequate preparation and safety measures by the family will make walking at home safe and hopefully injury free experience.

** Names have been changed to ensure privacy.*