



Key causes of external and preventable child deaths

2015–16 Child Death Annual Report Factsheet

TRANSPORT

25 transport deaths of children each year on average.*

9 deaths of young people **15–17 years**.

9 deaths of children **5–14 years**.

6 deaths of children **under 5 years**.

Deaths of 15–17 year olds were mostly in motor vehicles as passengers or drivers. Young children are vulnerable in driveways from low speed runovers.

Learner driver laws require 100 hours supervised driving experience as a pre-requisite for a provisional licence. Peer passenger and other restrictions apply.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring that passengers wear seatbelts and approved age-appropriate **child restraints** are used for children under 8 years.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Always use an age-appropriate child restraint or seatbelt.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Don't drive through floodwaters.
- Keep young children safe in driveways, parking areas and near roads.
- Don't let children under 16 years operate **adult-sized quad bikes** or allow children under 7 years to ride as passengers.

DROWNING

10 drowning deaths of children **0–17 years** each year.*

6 deaths of children aged **1–4 years**.

Children under 5 years were most likely to drown in **private pools, rural dams and bathtubs**.

* Counts of child deaths in this factsheet are averaged over the three year period 2013–14 to 2015–16.

Pool safety laws require that pools must have compliant fences and gates and a CPR sign nearby. Pools must be listed on the state pool safety register.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Maintain compliant pool fencing and be diligent about closing gates. Learn resuscitation.
- Provide constant supervision for infants and young children when they are in or near water.
- Don't walk away from infants in the bath or shower. Don't rely on siblings to supervise.
- Always swim between the flags. Teach children to swim from a young age.
- Teach children about dangers and 'no go' areas on rural properties. Provide a safe play area or barriers when hazards are nearby.
- Be especially vigilant of pools and water hazards when visiting with young children and in the first months in a new property.
- Use life jackets or PFDs when children are on boats, kayaks or any other water-craft.

FIRE & PRODUCT SAFETY

9 fire and non-intentional injury deaths of **0–17 year olds** each year on average.*

House fires caused **32** child deaths in Queensland in the 12 years from 2004 to 2015.

Young children are vulnerable to choking and strangulation hazards, falls and accidental poisoning.

Button batteries are toxic when swallowed; **2** child deaths and a number of serious injuries have occurred in recent years in Australia through children ingesting button batteries or inserting them into ears or noses.

Smoke alarm laws require that all dwellings have smoke alarms, with laws from 2017 requiring interconnected alarms in all bedrooms and living areas.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Replace smoke alarms every 10 years. Hard-wired photoelectric alarms are recommended, with these installed in bedrooms and living areas.
- Teach children fire safety and practice escape plans in the home.
- Never leave cigarette lighters or matches where children can see or reach them.
- Check home safety by keeping household cleaners and poisons out of reach. Check furniture will not tip if climbed and put window cords out of reach.
- Store button batteries out of reach of children and check that products have secure child-proof battery compartments.
- Call the Poisons Hotline if there is a suspicion that a button battery has been swallowed.

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME

37 sudden unexpected infant deaths each year.*

17 SIDS and undetermined causes infant deaths.¹

Some sudden unexpected infant deaths are found to be undiagnosed infant illnesses or sleep accidents.

Risk factors associated with SIDS and sudden deaths include co-sleeping, stomach or side sleeping position, soft surfaces or loose bedding, over-wrapping as well as infant factors (prematurity, history of respiratory illness) and parental factors (smoking, high risk lifestyles).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants are at higher risk of sudden infant deaths.

Safe sleeping messages:

- Sleep baby on the back from birth, not on the tummy or side.
- Sleep baby with the head and face uncovered.
- Keep baby smoke free before birth and after.
- Provide a safe sleeping environment night and day.
- Sleep baby in their own safe sleeping place in the same room as an adult carer for 6-12 months.
- Breastfeed baby.

¹ SIDS are sudden unexpected infant deaths, apparently occurring during sleep, where the cause remains unexplained after thorough investigation. For undetermined causes, the cause of death is unexplained but the death does not meet the criteria for SIDS.

SUICIDE

23 suicide deaths of young people each year.*

19 deaths of children aged **15–17 years** each year.

4 deaths of children aged **10–14 years** each year.

Higher rates of death for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children compared to non-Indigenous children
- males compared to females
- young people known to child protection.

Known suicide risk factors include previous suicidal or self harm behaviours, stressful precipitating incidents and mental health issues.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Provide encouragement and guidance through the difficult teenage years but be alert to signs of distress or instability.
- Get help for young people experiencing difficulty or threatening suicide as early as possible.
- Seek online advice or support through

www.kidshelpline.com.au

www.headspace.org.au

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

FATAL ASSAULT & NEGLECT

10 deaths of children **0–17 years** as a result of fatal assault and neglect each year on average.*

8 of the 10 deaths each year are committed by a family member.

Children **under 5 years** are at most risk.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Look out for the safety and wellbeing of friends and family.
- Don't accept violent, abusive or bullying behaviour in others.
- Seek help if family violence is occurring or a parent is distressed or unstable.
- If you are aware of a family in trouble – see what you can do to help or direct them to services.
- Find support services in your community through www.oneplace.org.au

VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES

4 children die each year* of notifiable conditions that are preventable or potentially preventable by vaccines.

The most common diseases causing the deaths were invasive meningococcal disease (vaccine preventable), invasive pneumococcal disease and influenza (vaccines for selected strains only).

Immunisation remains the safest and most effective way of providing protection from infectious disease. Immunisation protects not only immunised children but also children too young or not able to be vaccinated for medical reasons.

Preventing child death and injuries:

- Ensure children are fully immunised according to the National Immunisation Program Schedule www.immunise.health.gov.au
- Free flu vaccines are available for high risk groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 6 months to 4 years and children with severe medical conditions.

Data for prevention activities

QFCC collects, analyses and publishes information about child deaths to help prevent future deaths and serious injuries. We work with researchers and other agencies to raise community awareness and develop prevention programs and policies, by identifying risk factors, trends and emerging safety hazards.

QFCC can provide detailed child death data to researchers and organisations, at no cost – please email child_death_prevention@qfcc.qld.gov.au

Reports on child deaths and 12-year data tables can be found at www.qfcc.qld.gov.au