

Study: Infant walker injuries support AAP's call for a ban

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Infant walker injuries have declined as standards have gotten tougher and fewer people are using them, a new study found.

Still, thousands of children are injured each year, supporting the Academy's stance that the walkers should be banned, authors said.

Infant walkers have been a source of concern among health care professionals for years. They can lead to injuries from falling down stairs and gaining access to objects that otherwise may have been out of reach. Their use also can delay motor development, according to the study "Infant Walker-Related Injuries in the United States" (Sims A, et al. *Pediatrics*. Sept. 17, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2017-4332>).

In 1997, a voluntary standard called for walker frames to be wider than doorways. Tougher safety standards became mandatory in 2010, but the Academy has pushed to ban the walkers due to the hazards they present.

Researchers set out to look at injury trends after the standards went into place. Using data on emergency department visits for children under 15 months from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, they found 230,676 infant walker injuries from 1990-2014.

The most common source of injuries was falling down stairs, which made up 74%, followed by falling out of the walker. About 91% of the injuries were to the head or neck, and about 4.5% of the children were admitted to the hospital, according to the study.

Injuries declined significantly over the years. In 1990, there were 20,650 injuries compared to 3,201 in 2003, an 85% drop. Researchers credited the voluntary standards and decreasing use of walkers. Walker injuries fell another 37.5% from 2003-'14, but the decline was not statistically significant.

Zeroing in on the potential impact of the 2010 implementation of mandatory standards, there was an average of 2,801 injuries annually during the four years prior, which fell 23% to 2,165. Again, authors said the standards, declining use and walker recalls may have played a role.

Still, they said more than 2,000 injured children presenting to emergency departments each year are too many, and studies have found warnings to parents to be ineffective.

"Despite the decline in injuries, infant walkers remain an important and preventable source of injury among young children," they wrote, "which supports the position of the AAP to call for a ban on their manufacture and sale in the United States."

Resource

- [Information for parents from HealthyChildren.org on baby walkers](#)

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