

# Health Briefs

by LAURIE LARSON  
News Writer

## Home-exercise equipment injuries

Home-exercise equipment injuries increased more than 400 percent from 1982 to 1991, according to figures reported in the October *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*.

Children were most frequently injured by trapping fingers or toes in stationary-bicycle chains or wheel spokes. Eighty-three percent of equipment-related, extremity amputations resulted from children touching bicycles' exposed moving parts, according to 1991 National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) statistics.

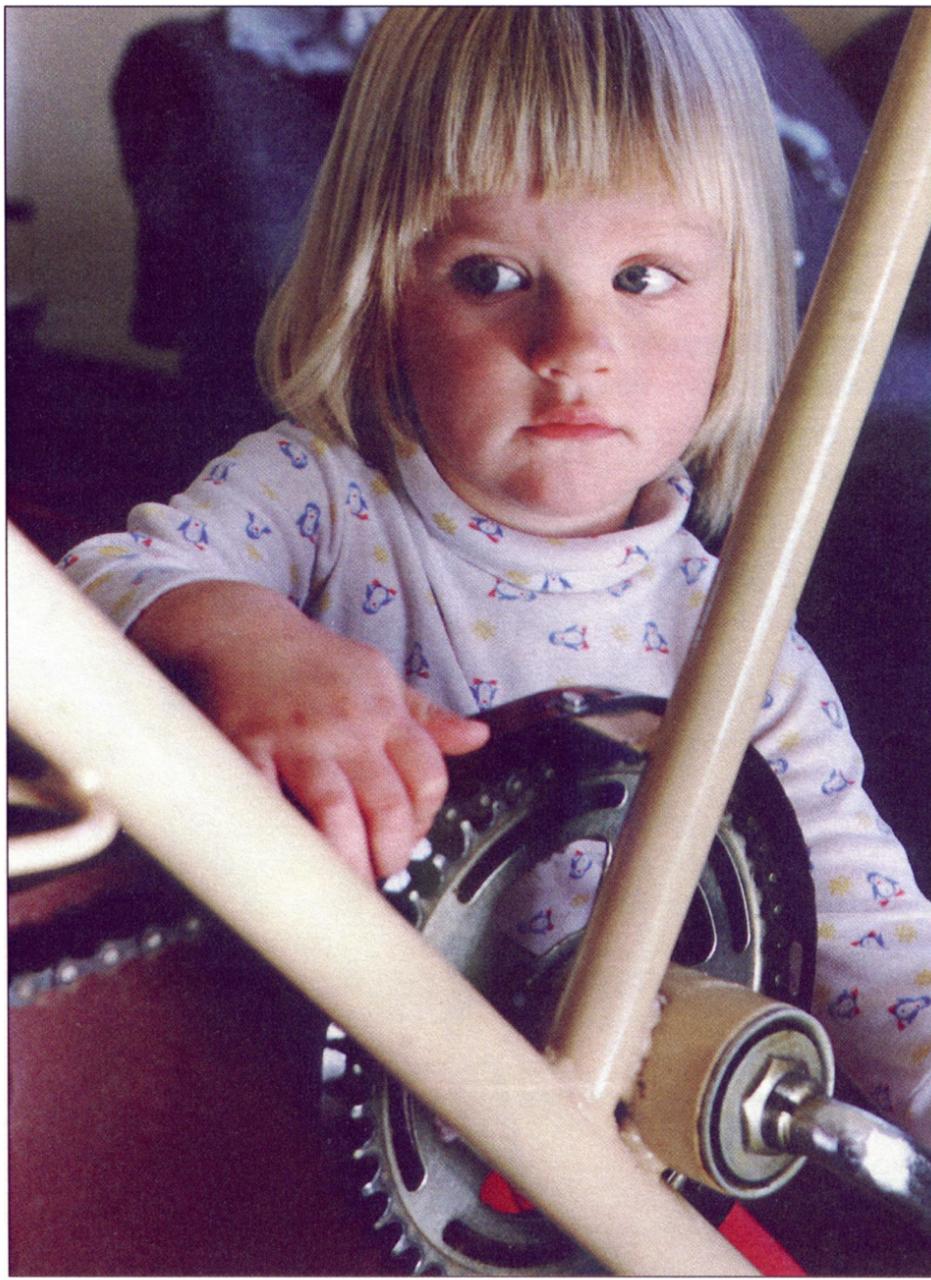
The second most frequent injury was jump-rope strangulation. Other injuries resulted from weights falling on children's heads, and falls from, or entrapment in, weight machines, step climbers or treadmills.

Injuries were reported in children ages 7 months to 16 years. Sixty-four percent of injuries, and 47 percent of equipment-related deaths, occurred in children ages 5 years or younger. Injuries happened most frequently during unsupervised play. NEISS statistics indicated that approximately 12,500 children are injured each year by home-exercise equipment.

## Coated ear tubes reduce infection

Ear infections in children receiving tympanostomy tubes for chronic otitis media might be reduced by half if tubes are coated with an antimicrobial substance, according to research reported by the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, Inc. (NACHRI).

Researchers at the University of California Davis School of Medicine and Medical Center, Sacramento, impregnated tympanostomy tubes with silver oxide, a method previously proven effective in reducing catheter-associated,



Joel Radtke

**Children often are injured when they place their fingers and toes too close to stationary-bicycle chains. Home-exercise equipment injuries increased more than 400 percent in fewer than 10 years, according to recently published statistics.**

urinary-tract infections. Five percent of children studied developed tube-related infections with silver oxide-coated tubes, compared to a 10 percent infection rate in children who received uncoated tubes. No side effects were reported.

Approval to use silver oxide-coated tympanostomy tubes is pending with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, fol-

lowing an application filed last March, University of California officials said.

## Hepatitis E vaccine

A single dose of a new hepatitis E virus (HEV) vaccine might prevent HEV-infected individuals from developing hepatitis, a study from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) stated.

HEV can be fatal in 20 percent of infected pregnant women, NIAID researchers reported. The virus has been epidemic in Mexico. It is the most common cause of hepatitis in some parts of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. HEV is transmitted in water contaminated by human waste.

Researchers vaccinated monkeys with a Pakistani HEV strain, created by cloning a copy of the gene that makes one of the virus' proteins. None of the vaccinated monkeys developed HEV.

## Maternal smoking during lactation

Breast-fed infants of smokers gained more weight in their first year than either breast-fed infants of nonsmokers or bottle-fed infants of smokers, according to a recent study reported in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

Researchers measured first-year growth of 74 breast-fed infants of smok-

ers, 64 bottle-fed infants of smokers and 195 breast-fed infants of nonsmokers. At age 1 year, breast-fed infants of smokers were heavier and had higher body mass than either of the other two groups. Infants studied were breast-fed for at least one month.

Although infants of smokers weighed an average of 73 grams less at birth than infants of nonsmokers, they weighed approximately 300 grams more than infants of nonsmokers after one year. Researchers calculated that every 10 cigarettes smoked while breastfeeding predicted an additional 3 percent infant body mass at age 1 year.

Researchers could not conclusively explain study results. They speculated that because smokers' milk supply tended to decrease sharply over the infants' first year, mothers might compensate infants with more solid food to soothe hunger and fussiness from nicotine withdrawal. Researchers also speculated that smoking changes breast milk's taste and smell, and infant response to it.

## Teen drug use up

More U.S. high-school seniors used drugs in 1993 than they have in over a decade, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) "Monitoring the Future" survey. Drug use among eighth- and 10th-graders also increased.

The 1993 survey found that almost 43 percent of high-school seniors had used an illegal drug at least once, up from 40.7 percent in 1992, the first increase in lifetime drug use since 1981. Senior drug use within the past year increased for the first time since 1979, from 27.1 percent to 31 percent.

Marijuana use increased most significantly. Between 1992 and 1993, eighth-grade marijuana use increased, from 7.2 percent to 9.2 percent. Among 10th-graders, marijuana smoking increased from 15.2 percent in 1992 to 19.2 percent in 1993. Seniors increased their annual marijuana use from 21.9 percent to 26 percent.

Seniors' daily cigarette smoking increased for the first time in a decade, from 17.2 percent in 1992 to 19 percent in 1993. Tenth-graders reported a 2.1 percent increase in cigarette smoking and eighth-graders reported a 1.3 percent increase. Eighth-grade inhalant use also increased significantly in 1993, up 2 percent over the previous year.

## Failure to thrive and maternal touch

Mothers of children with failure to thrive (FTT) don't give their children certain types of physical contact that promote growth and facilitate feeding, a study in the October *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* reported. Children with failure to thrive are defined as infants and toddlers who lose weight or do not gain weight appropriate to their age.

Researchers studied mother-child feeding and play interactions of 21 children with FTT, ages 9 months to 19 months, and 18 normally developing children. Mothers of children with FTT used less

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