

In a valuable addition to the global health library covering child rights, the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region Launches the Arabic version of the World Report on child Injury prevention, prepared jointly by WHO and Unicef.

The report presents a comprehensive coverage of all currently available knowledge about different types of unintentional injuries as those resulting from road traffic crashes, drowning, burns, falls and poisoning. Also more importantly, it describes how to prevent such injuries. The report supplements the study of the United Nations Secretary General study on violence and intentional injuries against children issued at the end of 2006.

Across the world 950 000 children under 18 years old, die of injuries, 90% of which are unintentional avoidable ones. This is in addition to tens of millions of unfatal injuries that lead to disabilities. Therefore child injuries represent one of the major public health problems.

Injuries as defined by the report means physical damage done when the human body is exposed to energy beyond its physiological capacity or the damage resulting from the absence of one or more vital elements as oxygen.

95% of these injuries occur in low and middle income countries, yet they lead also to 40% of children deaths in high income countries.

The report highlights injuries resulting from road crashes that lead to the death of 260 000 child annually world wide. Besides, such crashes expose 10 mn. child to non fatal injuries. The report numerates the causes of children exposition to injuries resulting from road crashes as small structure, unmaturation cognitive development, risk taking behaviour, influence of peer pressure to commit traffic violations in addition to the economic status and vehicles designs.

The report describes proven and effective strategies in preventing child injuries as wearing bicycles helmets, compulsory speed reduction around schools and playgrounds, using appropriate child restraints and seat belts and applying graduated driver licensing systems.

As for the causes of drowning mentioned in the report, they include lack of safety devices as life saving devices in transportation or recreational boats, unsafe means of transportation, adolescents substance abuse while practicing water sports, floods, hurricane and lack of swimming training opportunities.

The report recommends some procedures to prevent drowning by eliminating sources of water-related dangers (as covering wells and sinks), installing isolating four sided fences around swimming pools, wearing personal floatation devices, rapid reviving, emergency and existence of lifeguards.

The report pinpoints the fact that burnings represent a significant economic burden on the public health services as they lead to fatal burns by fire, hot liquid, flames, or touching hot surfaces as iron or electricity. Burning also results from storing flammable substances and lack of supervision on children.

Preventive measures to reduce the risk of burns include drafting laws for smoke detectors, separating cooking areas from living areas, using childproof lighters, banning the manufacturing and sale of fireworks and promoting the use of safe lamps and stores.

Falling is a normal part of the way a child develops. An estimated 47 000 young people under 20 years die annually from severe falls worldwide. The report explains that we can reduce injuries from falls by redesigning nursery furniture, enforcing regulations for window guards and using balcony and stairs rails.

Poisoning is considered the fifth cause for children deaths resulting from unintentional injuries. The main causes of child poisoning are drugs, kerosene bleaching substances, detergents, insecticides, poisonous plants and animal or insect bites. They lead to the death of about 45 000 young people annually. Among the proven promising strategies to prevent poisoning promoted by the report are eliminating causes of poisoning, packing drugs in small unlethal quantities and in child resistant packaging beyond the reach of children.

The Arabic version of the report shall be launched in the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office in Cairo and shall be inaugurated by the regional director Dr Hussein Gezairy and the Unicef representative in Egypt Dr Erma Mannkort on Sunday dated 8 November 2009.

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