

Many Parents, Caregivers Lack Basic Child-Safety Information

Parents of young children identified fewer than half of the potential safety hazards for kids in a home, but did far better than either health-care professionals or day-care workers, a new study finds.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham study also found that the mothers and fathers recognized fewer hazards when asked to note possible issues for their children as opposed to other toddlers in general, suggesting they thought their children knew better or were less vulnerable than others.

The study had the three groups of adults place stickers on what they considered safety issues in a mock living room, child's bedroom and bathroom. The researchers placed items such as prescription medication, cleaning products and marbles in the rooms, in addition to the inherent hazards such as the toilet and sink in the bathroom.

The parents, whose children were between 1 and 3 years old, marked only 47 percent of the safety hazards when asked to identify those that posed a risk for other children, and only 40 percent when asked to find ones that might be an issue for their children, according to the findings to be published in *Accident Analysis and Prevention*. Day-care employees noted only 37 percent of the hazards, while health-care professionals marked only 29 percent of them.

"While there were no benchmarks to assess whether this is a good or bad rate of recognition, it is concerning if it approximates behavior in real homes," the authors, doctoral student Joanna Gaines and pediatric psychologist David Schwebel of the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said in a news release.

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control says accidents are the leading cause of death for toddlers in the United States. More than 1,300 children aged 1 and 2 years died from unintentional injuries in 2005.

While formal schooling did not affect how well they recognized the hazards, Gaines noted that adults with more parent-related education, such as taking CPR courses or just reading parenting magazines, did better at spotting the potential safety issues.

SOURCE: University of Alabama at Birmingham, news release, Aug. 4, 2009