
Infant bath seats

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The Consumer Product Safety Bureau of Health Canada had become aware of an infant drowning hazard linked to the use of infant bath seats and bath rings. Accordingly, Health Canada made use of the Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program to obtain a better understanding of the frequency and extent of injuries, near-miss drownings and drownings associated with infant bath seats and bath rings in Canada. This was accomplished by surveying the experience of Canadian paediatricians treating such incidents, both in hospitals and private practices. The results stated in this summary represent one of a number of sources of data Health Canada has collected concerning incidents involving the use of infant bath seats and bath rings.

The survey question was designed to focus on infants as they are considered the target group for use of these products. The expected age range for the use of this product is from six to nine months, representing the time frame in which an infant can sit unassisted, to when they can pull to a standing position. However, several incidents reported to Health Canada have involved infants outside this age range.

A total of 1,087 paediatricians returned the survey, representing an overall return rate of 47.1%. Of the returned forms, 25 were received from paediatricians who recalled caring for one or more infants who had experienced injuries, near-miss drownings, or drownings related to the use of an infant bath seat or bath ring in the last two years. Seven paediatricians indicated that they would not have seen this type of incident due to the nature of their work.

In all, 2.3% of respondents reported treating one or more injuries, near-miss drownings, or drownings related to the use of infant bath seats and bath rings during the last two years. The breakdown of the data indicated that respondents treated a minimum of 34 infants with incidents including: 20 injuries (scrapes, cuts, bruises), 12 near-miss drownings, and two deaths.

Many of the paediatricians included comments on the returned survey. Nine noted lack of supervision, not the product itself, as the problem; four commented that these were dangerous devices and should be removed from the market; three were not aware that these types of products existed; three added that they frequently receive questions from parents about these products; and two indicated they used these products themselves for their children.

Conclusions

The findings of this survey offer a profile of the experience of Canadian paediatricians in treating, in the last two years, injuries, near-miss drownings, and drownings associated with infant bath seats or bath rings.

The Consumer Product Safety Bureau of Health Canada has received reports of nine injuries, 19 near-miss drownings, and 11 drowning deaths linked to the use of infant bath seats and bath rings since 1983. However, of these reported incidents, one injury, six near-miss drownings, and nine deaths have occurred in the last five years. In the United States, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has received reports of 163 injuries or near-miss drownings and 106 deaths due to the use of these products from January 1983 through October 2003. The Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program survey indicated that among

paediatricians who responded to this survey, 2.3% have treated one or more infants for injuries, near-miss drownings, or drownings in the last two years.

Typically, drownings linked to bath seats and bath rings occur as a result of the infant bath seat becoming unstable and tipping over in the bath, the infant climbing out of the infant bath seat, or the infant slipping through the leg opening and become lodged under water. Despite clear warning labels stating *Prevent drowning. Never leave child unattended* on the older bath seat models and *Prevent drowning. Always keep baby within arm's reach* on the newer models, in the majority of incidents, the infant had been left unattended or under the supervision of a sibling.

In the months ahead, Health Canada will review options to consider the public health implications of the survey findings. In addition, an advisory and a public education bulletin will be issued and posted on the Consumer Product Safety website: www.hcsc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/cps/index.htm

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