

BOOK REVIEWS

From crib to kindergarten: the essential child safety guide

Dorothy A Drago. Published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2007. US\$45.00 (hard cover), \$10.00 (paperback). ISBN 9780801885693

A PARENT'S VIEW

I was asked to write this review because I am a mother of two children. A PhD in biochemistry is of no parenting help whatsoever, and I was no better prepared for the challenge of protecting my children than any other parent, regardless of their educational level. One child is a rambunctious 3-year-old boy; the other a so-far placid 3-month-old girl. For my first child, information about safety issues came from general "baby" books commonly read by first-time mothers. I read the lists of "what not to do" to prevent injury with the same care and intensity as when I was preparing to defend my dissertation. When my second child was born, however, I found I had forgotten most of what I had read. I then read "From Crib to Kindergarten" by Dorothy Drago.

For me, Drago's approach is highly effective. I think most parents want to understand *why* precautions need to be taken rather than simply to be given lists of "what to do or not to do" to prevent an injury. The real value of this book is that she is able to communicate in a variety of ways that I think would appeal to a diversity of readers and reading styles. The book is unusually accessible and can be used both as a text and a reference guide by parents with little formal education.

The organization and layout are helpful. Each chapter is based on a child's daily routine, including bathing, eating, sleeping, playing, etc. For example, chapter 2 is Sleep Safety. It is divided into types of hazards associated with sleeping: suffocation; hanging and strangling; compression and trapping; and rebreathing. In each of these sections, the author explains how and why these injuries can occur, the type of injury risks for different ages, and key actions to prevent the injury. The chapter also includes detailed diagrams illustrating the injuries. After reading the whys and hows, the reader is encouraged to refer to tables at the end of the book summarizing each chapter by injury, age of highest risk, and the necessary precautions. This promotes using the book as a reference guide when a specific occasion arises.

Readers can keep up to date by consulting the list of resources found at the end of the book including phone numbers, mailing, and

internet addresses for organizations such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission and National Home Safety Council. The bibliography supports the text including references from the United States' Code of Federal Regulations to the latest findings from the top journals in the field.

I especially appreciated the correlation of injury to age, chapter 1 describing not only which injuries correlate with a child's age but why. I found this helpful because we are not always aware of the limitations infants and children have at specific ages. Parents often idealize or overestimate what their children are capable of doing—and not doing!

Drago also provides useful statistical data. This helped understand which injuries are a high risk, many of which I had never thought of. The one that surprised me most was infant deaths by suffocation that result from the child being wedged between a mattress and a wall. I remember sleeping with my first child as an infant and finding him in exactly that position; luckily his face was pointing upwards and not flush against the mattress. I would not have done this if I knew the risk.

Many chapters conclude with a list of "what to do" in case an injury occurs. For example, the chapter on food safety has "first aid to help a choking child." I like this because the author is realistic. We should watch our kids like hawks, never leave them unsupervised, etc, but this is impossible, especially for parents with more than one child.

The book is chock full of helpful diagrams that deliver clear safety messages. They allow the book to speak to readers of all education levels. While Drago's text is clear, the diagrams will help all readers to understand why particular actions are a high risk of injury. For example, in the food safety chapter, there are diagrams of the larynx and of pharynx anatomy and physiology which I found particularly helpful in understanding, that not talking while you are eating is a safety issue and not just a question of good manners. I now repeatedly remind my toddler to not talk while his mouth is full. Sometimes, he even listens!

E Cadieux

Montreal, Canada; elisabeth.cadieux@gmail.com

A PROFESSIONAL AND PARENTING VIEW

This delightful, well-written book is a script from real life with prevention strategies and safety measures to assist parents and care givers in developing skills and to help them in the demanding task of parenting or caregiving.

Unintentional domestic injuries are a major cause of the burden of disease in early

childhood. Children are constantly growing, changing, and developing new skills in their early childhood life. The author does an excellent job convincing parents that most childhood injuries are predictable and preventable.

The chapters are clearly written, with an introduction and key bullet points. The vocabulary is accessible for parents, care giver, and first-time baby sitters; use of technical or scientific terms is minimal; and there are clear definitions when they are used. The main ideas are clear and flow smoothly; similar issues are grouped and presented in a logical progression. Where appropriate, the risk factors and prevention strategies are presented in context, linking child development to injury risk.

One of the key strengths of this book is the solid foundation in evidence. The author cites many of the key studies that have guided injury prevention interventions. For example, in the section on "Bathing and dressing," Drago cites Katcher's important work on scald burns as evidence for reducing hot-water temperature. In the sections on furniture and playgrounds, concrete examples from current standards are presented. The author provides guidance related to firearms that is supported by the literature—first, that it is better not to have guns, but if parents do to store them properly.

One limitation that we noted was in the section on travel. Motorized travel is the primary focus, with excellent discussion related to safety seats. However, although there is a brief mention of drive-over injuries in driveways, there is no other mention of pedestrian injuries. Bicycle helmets are mentioned in the context of play, but there is no information provided about bicycle safety (eg, tricycles, bike seats, or trailers) in the travel section.

The last portion of this book is a table which includes the type of injury, the age of highest risk, and strategies to prevent each type of injury. The quick reference table format is set up so that parents, care givers, and baby sitters can use this portion as their day-to-day guide to keep their children safe. This section is based on the epidemiology of childhood injury, rather than on perception or lore. As scientists, we found that this book presents much of the best available evidence. As parents, we found this book to be a must-read.

N M Hossain

School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University, Toronto, Canada; nhossain@yorku.ca

A Macpherson

School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University, Toronto, Canada; alison3@yorku.ca