Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy KIDS

National Fact Sheet

Surrounding Our Kids with Safety

Children count on adults to keep them safe from harm. Unfortunately, our built environment often harms our children more than it helps them. Children are at risk when walking or biking on unsafe roads and are exposed to a wide range of toxins at schools and at home. Designing communities that keep our children safe is vital to improving their long-term health.

Pedestrian Safety

- Pedestrian injury is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 8-14.[1]
- Child pedestrian injuries are more likely to occur in areas with high traffic volume, higher posted speed limits, no divided highways, and few alternative play areas.[2]
- Traffic danger prevents 40 percent of children from walking or biking to school.[3] Nearly 60 percent of parents and children who do walk to school encounter at least one serious hazard, such as lack of sidewalks or crosswalks and wide roads.[4]
- Traffic-calming measures such as speed bumps can reduce the risk of injury or death among children struck by a car in their neighborhood by 50 percent or more.[5]

Lead

- While lead levels in children's blood have been decreasing, nearly half a million children have blood lead levels higher than the maximum safe standard[6] and an estimated 24 million homes have lead-based paint hazards.[7]
- Lead disproportionately impacts underserved communities. In inner cities, one in every four to six children may have elevated lead levels[8] and children from poor families are eight times more likely to be poisoned by lead than those from higher income families.[9]

Mold

- Mold is present in many environments, but it is more likely to become a problem in substandard, poorly maintained homes and schools.
- Hundreds of schools across the country have been closed temporarily because of mold.[10]
- Exposure to mold and dampness in the home doubles the risk of asthma development in children.[11]

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1 "Facts About Injuries to Child Pedestrians," Safe Kids WorldWide, http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/Ped_facts.pdf.
2 "Facts About Injuries to Child Pedestrians," Safe Kids WorldWide, http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/Ped_facts.pdf.
3 "Safety Facts," Safe Community Coalition, http://www.safecommunitycoalition.org/Pedestrians%20Fact%20Sheets%20-%20Dane%20Cty.pdf.
4 "Facts About Injuries to Child Pedestrians," Safe Kids WorldWide, http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/Ped_facts.pdf.
5 "Facts About Injuries to Child Pedestrians," Safe Kids WorldWide, http://www.usa.safekids.org/content_documents/Ped_facts.pdf.
6 "Children's Blood Lead Levels in the United States," Centers for Disease Control, http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/research/kidsBLL.htm.
7 "Home-Based Child Care Lead Safety Program," National Center for Health Housing, http://www.centerforhealthyhousing.org/html/leap.html.
8 "The Built Environment and Health: 11 Profiles of Neighborhood Transformation," Prevention Institute, http://www.preventioninstitute.org/builtenv.html.
9 "Lead," Community Environmental Health Resource Center, 2004, http://www.cehrc.org/tools/lead/index.cfm.
10 "How Healthy Is Your School?" National Safety Council, http://www.nsc.org/home/articles/01fal20.htm.
11 "Study: Mold in Homes Doubles Risk of Asthma," Environmental Health Perspectives, 2005, http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/press/030105c.html.