

# ...a pound of cure

Activity, fun and safety:  
finding a balance

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As a trauma centre, The Montreal Children's Hospital of the MUHC is continually faced with the challenge of finding an effective way of conveying the important message of balancing activity and fun with safety. According to the World Health Organization, prevention strategies should be developed through a combination of education, environmental measures and in some cases, enforcement. Endless legislation is not always the most well received and effective strategy. Likewise, the important message of preventing injuries should not lead to a generation of overweight couch potatoes.

It is heartbreakingly tragic to stand at the bedside of a permanently injured or dying child, following a preventable traumatic injury, with a guilt-ridden family telling you they "never thought of or realized the potential risks". The devastating effects of traumatic injuries have an impact on the entire family. As experts in trauma care, we see first hand the results of lack of knowledge, poor judgment, limited allocation of government resources, and of course, immature attitudes of invincibility.



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It is discouraging to hear people express the sentiment that children are not allowed to take sufficient risks in their developing years and that their environment is being made too safe. If you look up the term "accident" in the dictionary you will find that it implies "an act of fate". In reality most traumatic injuries are not "accidents" as at least 90% of them are preventable.

It seems irresponsible to conveniently ignore that trauma is the leading cause of death and disability in children and teens.

Many skeptics realize the importance of using a seatbelt, wearing a sport appropriate helmet, not buying a backyard trampoline, upholding a baby walker ban, or installing a fence with a locked gate around a home pool only after experiencing a close call. Unfortunately, when it comes to trauma, not everyone gets a second chance to make a smarter choice.

Our message to children and teens is to be active and have fun, but to do so knowing the risks, following the recommendations of experts, and making wise choices. We truly hope that this message gets through. ■

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