



# Health & Safety

## Saving Children's Spines

(NAPSA)—While between 1,500 to 2,000 children and adolescents sustain spinal cord injuries every year, you can help keep your kids out of such statistics.

The spinal cord is the bundle of nerves inside the backbone. It controls voluntary actions—moving arms or legs—and involuntary actions—digestion or breathing.

Spinal cord injury can result in paralysis and disruption of bowel, bladder and sexual function. Such injuries can also affect all areas of life, including relationships, mental health, independent living, education, employment and overall satisfaction with life. Spinal cord injury also lowers life expectancy and can lead to complications, including urinary tract infections, pressure ulcers, pain, depression and spasticity.

### What You Can Do

Most spinal cord injuries are due to accidents. Parents can protect their children in several ways. For example:

**When driving:** Avoid distractions, including texting, talking on the phone, eating, disruptive passengers or pets. Never drink and drive. Be sure everyone wears a seat belt and properly restrain children under age 12 in the backseat. Young children should be in age-, height- and weight-appropriate safety or booster seats. Teach safe driving habits (especially avoiding distractions) to your teen drivers.

**Prevent falls:** Avoid throw rugs in the home. Replace or repair torn carpets. Keep your home and stairways well lit and floors and pathways clear.

**Avoid violence:** Teach children never to play with guns and keep them locked, out of sight and unloaded.

**Dive with caution:** Have clearly visible depth indicators around the entire pool. Don't let anyone dive into water less than 9 feet deep or into any above-ground



**Safety is no accident: Proper caution could save many children from spinal cord injury.**

pool. Be sure the pool area is adequately lit.

**Playground precautions:** Check playground and playing fields to be sure they are properly maintained and equipment meets safety standards. Be sure there is appropriate adult supervision.

**Trampoline rules:** Have protective padding on supports and surrounding land surfaces. Only one person on at a time.

**Sports suggestions:** All athletes should always wear appropriate clothes, shoes and safety gear.

Shriners Hospitals for Children®, which opened the first spinal cord injury rehabilitation centers dedicated exclusively to rehabilitation and management of pediatric spinal cord injury, is committed to decreasing the number of preventable pediatric spinal cord injuries by raising awareness and providing educational materials, especially to parents and families.

### Learn More

Shriners Hospitals for Children cares for children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate, regardless of the families' ability to pay. Further facts and free materials are available at [shrinershospitalsforchildren.org](http://shrinershospitalsforchildren.org).