

HIGHLAND

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Young people at risk during teatime rush

Spike in children suffering injury after school hours

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ALMOST one in three cases where children are injured in road accidents happen in the after-school rush, according to a safety group.

There is also a peak in children rushed to casualty between 5pm and 7pm with injuries from burns and falls, the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) say.

A study of 18,948 children under 15 attending NHS Lothian A&E departments over the five years from January 2010 to December 2014 showed a peak in accidental injury during the late afternoon into early evening.

Babies and toddlers make up over half of all child burn victims, grabbing at hot drinks, kettles, cookers and irons while parents' backs are turned, the charity says.

The findings mark the launch of Child Safety Week, a national awareness campaign run by the CAPT aimed at equipping Scottish families with knowledge about serious accident risks to children and the steps to prevent them.

CAPT say the peak in child road casualties is strongly linked to the after-school rush. The increase in burns and falls reflects how, for many parents, teatime is when demands on their time peak.

A study using figures covering 2009 to 2013 shows that 29 per cent of weekday road casualties involving children happened 3pm-5pm.

CAPT chief executive Katrina Phillips said: "Scotland's children suffer more burns, falls and road accidents during the after-school rush than at any other time of day.

"Parents are up against it to get everyone home, tea on the table, clothes ironed and tired children into the bath. It's hardly surprising safety measures get missed.

"But these can be devastating injuries. A hot drink can scar a baby for life. A child can suffer brain damage if hit by a car.

"Simple changes to teatime routines can protect children from serious harm - whether that's putting your mug of tea out of reach or practising road safety on the walk home from school."

The Scottish Road Safety Framework, launched in June 2009, set

out specific targets for reducing the number of casualties by 2020.

The framework sought a 65 per cent reduction in the number of children seriously injured by 2020.

The reductions observed last year stood at 56 per cent compared to the 2004-2008 starting point.

Dr Lindsey Reid, consultant paediatrician at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, talking about the impact of teatime accidents on children and their families, said: "We see a massive peak at this time of day, from serious burns and road accidents through to more minor injuries.

"Recently we had a call about a child who had pulled the flex of a boiling kettle. We were sure we'd misheard when they said 60 per cent burns and thought it must be 16 per cent. But sure enough, when they came in, the child had suffered 60 per cent burns.

"Too often I see parents blame themselves. If they could have foreseen or done something to prevent their child's and their own pain they would have done it. That is why Child Safety Week is so important, to raise awareness of the simple things that can prevent such serious injuries from happening."

Child Safety Week is supported by the Scottish Government's community safety unit.

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