

Accident Prevention

Prevent falls from windows and balconies

An increasing number of children are admitted to hospital each year as a result of falling from windows and balconies. These falls are often in their own home and can result in death or serious injury.

Children aged from one to five years are most at risk as they are naturally curious but lack the ability to recognise danger. Falls occur more often in the warmer months when families leave windows and doors to balconies open both during the day and at night.

Windows should permit a maximum opening of 12.5cm for windows and balustrades (where regulated). There are no laws that require

window and balustrade openings in older buildings to meet current building standards. However, there are things you can do to improve safety.

If you live in a rented property make sure to get your landlord's written consent before adding a fixture or making an alteration to your home. By law, a landlord cannot unreasonably refuse consent for a tenant to make minor changes, such as installing window safety devices or other security features.



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Window safety

Children can fall out of a window which is open more than 12.5cm, even if a flyscreen is fitted.

To prevent children falling from your windows, it is recommended that

- where possible, all windows, especially bedroom windows:
 - are not opened more than 12.5cm when located above the ground floor.
 - have window latches/locks fitted to stop windows opening more than 12.5cm or guards to protect the opening
 - open from the top.
- beds and other furniture are kept away from windows, so that children cannot use them to climb up to the windows.
- you do not rely on flyscreens to prevent a child falling out of a window.
- children are taught to play away from windows.
- children are always supervised.



Balcony safety

To prevent children falling from your balcony, it is recommended that:

- where possible, balustrades (railings):
 - are at least 1 metre high.
 - have vertical bars which are no more than 12.5cm apart (use a ruler to measure the gaps between your vertical balustrade posts).
 - have no horizontal or near horizontal parts that would allow children to climb.
- all furniture, potted plants and other climbable objects are kept away from the edge of balconies.
- you are aware of furniture that is light enough for children to drag to the balcony edge.
- doors leading to balconies are locked to prevent child access to them.
- children are always supervised.

