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## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

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BC Ambulance Service  
BC Children's Hospital

### **Paramedics and Physicians Encourage Window Safety**

VANCOUVER – As the weather warms up, so does the potential for young children to fall out of windows that don't have proper security locks. BC Ambulance Service and BC Children's Hospital are asking parents to make sure their windows and balconies are safe. This month, at least one child has fallen through an open window, but thankfully their injuries were minor. Over the past five years, there has been an average of 18 children per year taken to BC trauma hospitals for injuries sustained as a result of falling out of windows or balconies.

Paramedics see the critical injuries that result from falls from windows and balconies, most often including broken bones and facial and head trauma. "The best advice we can give is to make sure there are safety locks on windows and doors, especially if you care for young children or have kids visiting your home," says BC Ambulance Service Unit Chief Marilyn Oberg.

"Young children are curious by nature, are good climbers and often don't understand the consequences of their actions," said Dr. Ash Singhal, pediatric neurosurgeon and medical director, BC Children's Hospital Trauma Program. "Children between one and six years of age are particularly vulnerable to falls. Many of the injuries can be quite severe, requiring surgery and causing potentially long term effects for the child."

While it might be tempting to leave a window open a crack to let in some fresh air during the warmer months, remember that young children can be strong enough to widen an unlocked window enough to fall out of it. Toddlers have a high centre of gravity, so even leaning out of a window can lead to a fall, likely headfirst, which can lead to serious injuries.

#### **Safety tips to prevent falls from windows:**

- Window screens **will not** prevent children from falling through – they keep bugs out, not children in.
- Don't underestimate a child's mobility; children begin climbing before they can walk.
- Move household items away from windows to discourage children from climbing to peer out. Toddlers may use anything as a step stool to get higher.
- Install window guards on windows above the ground level. These act like a gate in front of the window.

- Or, fasten the windows, so that they cannot open more than 10 centimetres (four inches). Children can fit through spaces as small as 12 centimetres (five inches) wide. In either case, ensure there is a safe release option in case of a house fire.
- Don't leave children unattended on balconies or decks. Move furniture or planters away from the edges as kids can climb up and over.
- Talk to your children about the dangers of opening and playing near windows, particularly on upper floors of the home.

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BC Children's Hospital and BC Ambulance Service spokespeople are available for interviews.

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