

# Keep the Melons in the Cart

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Earlier this summer, my good buddy Lee came over and helped me build a swing set for our kids. Lee's very handy, so it's an awesome setup, with a fort and sandbox underneath it. The kids absolutely love it and they thank 'Mr. Lee' whenever they see him.

Unfortunately, though, our daughter fell off the swing one day and actually ended up fracturing her skull and getting a concussion. She had no internal injury or bleeding - she just cracked the eggshell and the yolk is fine, as our doctor put it.

We're so grateful that she's doing well. We're also very thankful for her doctors, especially our good friend Karl, who just happens to be a neurosurgeon. That being said, it was one of the scariest experiences of our life and I'm sure I worried at least 10 years off my life. Thankfully our doctors and Karl were able to explain her injury and put our minds (slightly) at ease by letting us know she would be all right.

Because that was such a terrible experience, I pray we, or any other parents, never have to worry about another head injury for our kids. However, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, our kids may be at risk for head injuries somewhere we go every week - the grocery store.

The CPSC has determined that shopping cart falls are one of the leading causes of head injuries among children ages 5 and under. According to the CPSC, there are over 30,000 injuries each year attributable to shopping cart falls, some of them severe, including internal head injuries, concussions, skull and femur fractures. The CPSC also estimates that over 17,000 children are treated in emergency rooms each year because of shopping cart falls.

As a result, several lawsuits are filed each year by the parents of the injured kids against shopping cart manufacturers and stores with carts.

In response, large retailers and shopping cart manufacturers cooperated with the CPSC and The Food Marketing Institute to publish educational materials for parents and caregivers about the hazards associated with shopping carts. The materials were distributed to over 1,300 member supermarket companies.

According to one pediatrician, however, education isn't enough. After treating dozens of patients that suffered shopping cart-related injuries, Dr. Joseph W. Russell discovered that the high center of gravity for the seated child in a cart can lead to tip-overs. Also, because the child sits so high, injuries are common when the children crawl out of or fall from the seat.

Working with engineers, Dr. Russell developed a new cart that seats the child lower, which he believes would significantly reduce the number of injuries. Because of a minimal cost increase for producing the safer carts, shopping cart manufacturers and retailers seem content to focus on education as opposed to cart re-design.

Therefore, parents should follow these shopping cart guidelines provided by the CPSC to prevent falls:

- \* Use seatbelts to restrain your child in the cart seat.
- \* Don't allow your child to ride in the cart basket.
- \* Don't allow your child to ride or climb on the sides or front of the cart.
- \* Don't allow an older child to push the cart with another child in it.

If we follow these rules, hopefully I'll only have to harass Dr. Karl about his model trains and not head injuries.

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