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## MEDIA RELEASE

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Provincial Health Services Authority

### **Open windows can increase risk of falls for children**

Vancouver – Record high temperatures are forecasted throughout BC this weekend, increasing the risk of young children falling out of open windows and from balconies.

In advance of the warmer weather, BC Ambulance Service and BC Children's Hospital are asking parents of young children to think twice before opening the window. Caregivers should make sure proper safety latches are installed on windows and that climbing hazards are removed from areas near windows and balconies.

Parents and caregivers are also cautioned that window screens do not offer adequate protection. These screens are not strong enough to withstand the weight of a child pushing against them and should never be relied on as a safety measures.

BC Children's Hospital reports that at least 10 children were taken to hospital as a result of falling out of windows last year, and there have been at least two children injured already this spring.

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

- Talk to children about window and balcony safety.
- Window screens are **not strong** enough to hold the weight of a child – they keep bugs out, not children in.
- Move furniture and planters away from windows and balcony edges to discourage children from climbing, especially cribs and beds.
- Install and maintain window safety devices - ensure there is a safe release option in case of a house fire.
- Keep windows open 10 centimetres or less – children can fit through a space as small as 12 centimetres.
- Don't leave children unattended on balconies or in higher floor rooms with open windows.

**Quotes:****BC Ambulance Service Paramedic Michael Binns**

“Calls involving children are often the most difficult incidents that paramedics respond to,” said BC Ambulance Service Paramedic Michael Binns. “Paramedics see firsthand the critical injuries that result from falls – head and facial injuries, broken bones and other often severe conditions. The most tragic part is that often, falls from windows and balconies can be prevented.”

**Dr. Ash Singhal, pediatric neurosurgeon and medical director, BC Children’s Hospital Trauma Program**

“Young children are curious by nature and can climb easily – they 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.”

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