



# media release

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## **Home hazardous home..... a risky place to be**

If you think that staying at home and slamming the door on the outside world is the safest thing to do, think again. New research from the University of Otago, Wellington shows that there are many hazards around the home where there are high rates of all types of injury, including serious events that put people in hospital and in wheelchairs.

“As it’s Safety NZ Week, I think it’s important to draw attention to research, which shows that injury hazards around the home may have quite a significant impact on the likelihood of someone suffering an injury,” says public health researcher Dr Michael Keall.

Dr Keall, together with other researchers at the University of Otago, Wellington and BRANZ, studied 102 houses in Lower Hutt regarding injury hazards. They found there was a 22% increase in the likelihood of people injuring themselves associated with each *additional* injury hazard in the home. The study has been published in the international journal *Accident and Analysis Prevention*.

The research identified a number of potential injury hazards, such as slippery bathroom surfaces, excessively hot water, missing handrails on stairs, steps between the kitchen and the dining area, as well as poorly maintained or slippery outdoor steps and pathways amongst others.

An index of hazards around the home was developed against which home injuries were compared. The researchers say this could lead to further research with the Healthy Housing Index (a measure of the health and safety of the home) as a tool for identifying and mitigating risk.

“This research suggests that the development of these measures of health and safety in the home could be useful in improving the health, safety and energy efficiency of our homes,” says Dr Keall.

“Potentially our research may show home hazards worth fixing, which would have a significant saving for ACC. In the last financial year it paid out more than \$377 million for home injuries. It’s similar overseas, where in the USA 46% of medically treated injuries occurred in and around the home in 2004.”

The study shows that 40% of houses studied in Lower Hutt had between seven and nine hazards and 30% had more than 10 hazards. Overall as home hazards increased, the greater the risk of injury for residents.

The research team is currently carrying out a larger ACC-funded study in Taranaki looking at home injury hazards and injury. The researchers say that this larger survey is identifying

the benefits of an assessment tool to quantify injury risk in houses, and to guide remediation of the more dangerous hazards in New Zealand homes.

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