

Sports and Recreation Safety

Key Facts: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that every child should have an opportunity to participate in sports or any recreational activity that promotes regular physical activity. Participation can be related to health benefits as well as health risks.¹ Although deaths among children playing organized sports are rare, sports injuries are a common occurrence among children.²

- Brain injury is the leading cause of sports-related death to children.³
- Each year, more than 3.5 million children ages 14 years and under receive medical treatment for sports injuries.⁴
- Approximately 2 out of 5 traumatic brain injuries among children are associated with participation in sports and recreational activities.^{5 6}
- More than 30 million children participate in sports each year in the United States.⁷
- Nearly three-quarters of U.S. households with school-age children have at least one child who plays organized sports.⁸
- The most common types of sport-related injuries in children are sprains (mostly ankle), muscle strains, bone or growth plate injuries, repetitive motion injuries, and heat-related illness.⁹

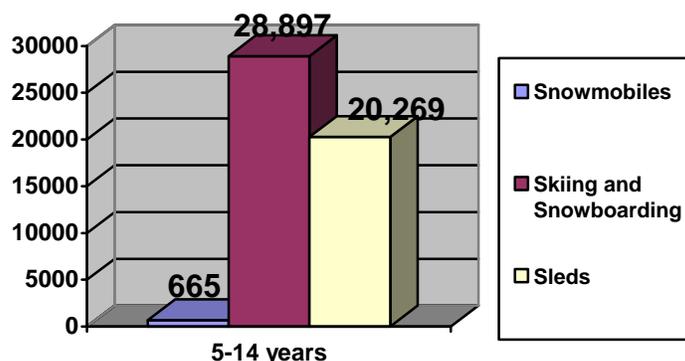
Sport

- A recent survey found that among athletes ages 5 to 14 years, 15 percent of basketball players, 28 percent of football players, 22 percent of soccer players, 25 percent of baseball players, and 12 percent of softball players have been injured while playing their respective sports.¹⁰
- In 2004, nearly 391,800 children ages 5 to 14 years were treated in hospital emergency rooms for either football or basketball-related injuries.¹¹

Winter Sports¹²

- Each year, children ages 0-14 years sustain nearly 52,000 injuries involving snowmobiles, sleds, snow skis or snowboards.
- Children ages 5-14 years are at a higher risk of winter sports injuries; each year, approximately 49,000 injuries are sustained among this age group involving skiing, snowboarding or sledding.

2005 Annual Injuries among Children (Ages 5-14) by Product¹³



Where, When and How

- Most organized sports-related injuries (62 percent) occur during practice rather than games.¹⁴
- Collision and contact sports are associated with higher rates of injury. However, injuries from individual sports tend to be more severe.^{15 16 17}
- Each year, approximately 715,000 sports and recreation injuries occur in school settings alone.¹⁸
- A national survey revealed that approximately 33 percent of parents often do not take the same safety precautions during their child's practice as they would for a game.¹⁹

Who

- Older children are more likely to suffer from bicycle- and sports-related injuries and overexertion than younger children.²⁰
- Black children are one and a half times more likely than white children to suffer sports-related injuries.²¹
- Children ages 5 to 14 years account for nearly 40 percent of all sports-related injuries treated in hospital emergency departments.²² The rate and severity of sports-related injury increases with a child's age.^{23 24 25}
- Children who do not wear or use protective equipment are at greater risk of sustaining sports-related injuries. Inappropriate or unavailable equipment are reasons for children's not wearing protective gear.^{26 27}
- The highest rates of injury for boys, in regards to sports, are ice hockey, rugby and soccer. Soccer, basketball and gymnastics seem to incur the highest rates of injury in girls.²⁸

Proven Interventions

- Children should have access to and consistently use the appropriate gear necessary for each respective sport.²⁹

- Children enrolled in organized sports through schools, community clubs, and recreation areas that are properly maintained assist in injury prevention.
- Coaches should be trained in first aid and CPR, and should have a plan for responding to emergencies. Coaches should be well versed in the proper use of equipment, and should enforce rules on equipment use.
- Sports programs with adults on staff who are Certified Athletic Trainers are ideal because they are trained to prevent or provide immediate care for athletic injuries.

Suggested Citation: Safe Kids Worldwide (SKW). Sports and Recreation Safety. Washington (DC): SKW, 2007.

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