

## **Skateboard and Scooter Safety**

Skateboarding and non-powered scooters are sports that have become very popular in the past decade. Unfortunately, the numbers of injuries related to these sports are increasing as well. Nationwide, over 1000 kids go to the emergency department on a weekly basis for skateboarding and scooter related injuries. Here are some things to know that will keep these sports fun and safe.

### **What are the most common skateboarding injuries?**

Sprains, fractures, contusions and abrasions are the most frequent. 74% of reported injuries were of the extremities. Among these, broken wrists and ankles and long bone fractures are the most common injuries. Head injuries accounted for 21% of all injuries.

### **What are the most common scooter injuries?**

Fractures and dislocations accounted for one-third of the injuries on scooters. Thirty-four percent of reported scooter injuries were to the wrists, lower arms, elbows and knees. Head and face injuries accounted for 29% of all injuries.

### **Who is the most likely to get hurt?**

Children under the age of 15 are most likely to be injured from both skateboards and scooters. In 2002, 60,100 children nationwide under the age of 15 were seen in emergency rooms for skateboarding related injuries; 6 out of every 10 skateboarding injuries occur to children ages 14 and younger. Also in 2002, 51,300 children were seen in hospital emergency rooms for non-powered scooter related injuries. Seventy-five percent of these scooter related injuries were to children ages 5 to 14.

### **How do most injuries happen?**

Most injuries to children on scooters and skateboards result from falls. The age, development, and judgment of the child and the riding conditions contribute to why these injuries occur. Underdeveloped motor coordination, which contributes to a loss of balance, is a main cause of falls in younger and less experienced riders. Also, smaller and younger children have a higher center of gravity due to the larger proportion of their head, which contributes to an increased likelihood of a child falling. Finally, young children often poorly judge their skills and strength and lack the ability to make good decisions in pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic.

Rough riding surfaces cause many falls by older and more experienced riders. To prevent injuries, riders should screen an area for small stones, sticks, bumps, holes, gravel, water, and sand.

Deaths from injuries on skateboards or scooters are rare. Most of the deaths that do occur are a result of a collision with a motor vehicle.

## **How do you prevent skateboarding and scooter injuries?**

### **Use Protective Gear.**

**1. Helmets.** Proper and consistent use of a helmet while riding a skateboard or scooter can reduce the risk of the most serious injuries. Riders can use a bicycle helmet that is labeled as complying with the Consumer Product Safety Commission standard or a multisport helmet that complies with the N-94 standard of the Snell Memorial Foundation.

For helmets to provide maximum protection, they must fit properly. When shopping for a helmet, remember the Eyes, Ears, Mouth formula for a proper fit:

- **Eyes:** The rim of the helmet should be one to two finger-widths above the eyebrows.
- **Ears:** The straps should form a "V" just beneath the ear lobe.
- **Mouth:** The buckle should be flush against the skin under the chin; when the rider opens his mouth, he should feel the strap snug on the chin and the helmet hugging the head.

**2. Padding.** Padding is available for the parts of the body that are the most fragile and most commonly injured areas: wrists, knees, and elbows. This padding helps to reduce and prevent the severity of injuries from a fall.

**3. Basic Coverage.** In addition to padding, basic coverage is a good idea. Closed-toe shoes with good grip provide a safe base for the rider. Long sleeves and pants can help protect and against cuts and scrapes.

**Practice Common Sense.** Talk about these points with your child or teen:

1. Remember that there is a risk involved in riding a scooter or skateboard. Take steps to protect yourself by always wearing a helmet and appropriate protective gear;
2. Avoid risky situations, such as riding at dusk or at night, riding in or near traffic, or "skitching a ride," which is holding on to the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard;
3. Be patient. Fancy tricks on skateboards take time to perfect. Don't let peer pressure push you to do stunts that you are not ready to do;

4. Ride in a safe environment. Children under age 15 should never ride in the street, at night, or near traffic. Riding surfaces should be smooth and clear of debris or water.

**Learn How to Fall.** Here are some tips to teach a new rider:

- If you are losing your balance, crouch down on the skateboard so that your center of gravity is lower and so you will not have as far to fall.
- Try to land on the fleshy parts of your body.
- In a fall, try to roll to spread out the forces of impact more evenly rather than absorb the force with your arms or any one part of your body.
- Try to relax rather than stiffen your body in a fall.
- Practice falling on a soft surface or grass.

**Equipment Check.** Boards and other equipment should also be checked before riding to make sure they are in proper working order. Look for cracks, loose parts, and properly attached gripping on boards.

**Provide Supervision.** All children need close supervision, especially those between the ages of 6 and 10 when riding a skateboard or scooter. Children under the age of 5 should not use skateboards and children 8 and younger, who are at a greater risk of scooter injuries than older children, should not use a scooter without close adult supervision.

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics Skateboard and Scooter Injuries Policy Statement, PEDIATRICS Vol. 109 No. 3 March 2002, pp. 542-543.

Skateboards Fact Sheet (Publication #93), U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

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