
Sports and Recreation Safety Fact Sheet (2013)

Fatalities

- Between 2004 and 2009, there were 24 sports-related deaths in high school athletes.¹ There are no reliable statistics on the number of fatalities involving sports among younger children. However, researchers believe that traumatic brain injuries and sudden cardiac arrest are leading causes of death in young athletes.^{2,3}
- 40 children died from 2001 through 2008 as a result of playground-associated injuries. The average age was 6 years old.⁴

Injuries

- More than 2.6 million children ages 19 and under were seen in emergency departments for injuries related to sports and recreation.⁵ This includes sports, such as football and basketball, as well as activities, such as playing on a playground, scooter riding and trampolining.⁵
- 784,148 children ages 19 and under were seen in emergency departments for injuries related to football or basketball in 2012.⁶

Number of injuries by sport among children ages 19 and under, 2012⁶

| Sport | Number of Injuries |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Football | 394,333 |
| Basketball | 389,815 |
| Soccer | 172,356 |
| Baseball | 119,869 |
| Softball | 58,140 |
| Volleyball | 43,185 |
| Wrestling | 40,805 |
| Cheerleading | 38,016 |
| Gymnastics | 28,239 |
| Track and field | 24,999 |
| Lacrosse | 19,490 |
| Ice hockey | 12,736 |
| Tennis | 7,512 |
| Field hockey | 4,382 |



Additional Statistics

- More than 38 million children and adolescents participate in sports each year in the U.S.⁷
- The most common types of sport-related injuries among children are sprains (mostly ankle), muscle strains, bone or growth plate injuries, repetitive motion injuries and heat-related illness.⁷
- Children’s bones, muscles, tendons and ligaments are still growing, making them more susceptible to injury.⁸
- The four activities with the most injuries to bones and muscles include bicycling, basketball, football and roller sports.⁹
- Children who participate in two or more sports that emphasize the same body part (for example, swimmers and baseball pitchers) are at higher risk of overuse injuries than those who participate in sports with different muscle emphasis (for example, track and golf).¹⁰
- For boys and girls ages 9 and under, concussions happen most often while playing on a playground or when bicycling.⁵
- An estimated 395,274 high school athletes sustained concussions from 2005-2008.¹¹
- For boys ages 10 to 19 years, concussions happen most often while playing football or bicycling, and girls most often get concussions playing soccer or basketball or while bicycling.⁵
- More than 90 percent of sports-related concussions occur without the loss of consciousness.¹²
- In high school sports that both boys and girls play, such as soccer and basketball, girls sustain a higher rate of concussions than boys.¹³
- Children are at increased risk of heat illness. Compared to adults, children have a lower sweating capacity and produce more metabolic heat per unit of mass during physical activities.¹⁴
- It is estimated that more than 9,000 high school athletes are treated for heat illness each year.¹⁵
- One in three children who play a team sport is injured seriously enough to miss practice or games.¹⁶
- Most organized sports-related injuries (62 percent) occur during practice rather than games.¹⁷

References

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¹⁵ Kerr ZY et al. Epidemiology of exertional heat illness among U.S. high school athletes. *Am J Prev Med*. 2013. 44(1): 8-14.

¹⁶ Mickalide AD, Hansen LM. *Coaching Our Kids to Fewer Injuries: A Report on Youth Sports Safety*. Washington, DC: Safe Kids Worldwide, April 2012.

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Last updated October 2013. If you have a question about this factsheet, please call 202-662-0600.

