



Skateboarding Safety

#5 in a series from Rideout Health, in service to our community

IF YOU WITNESS AN ACCIDENT, CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY!

Skateboarding Safety

There are many things that parents and children can do to help prevent skateboarding injuries, such as carefully selecting safe places to ride, and wearing protective gear, especially helmets.

In recent years, skateboarding spin-offs, such as long-boarding and mountain boarding, have become increasingly common.

Although it is a fun activity, skateboarding carries with it a serious risk for injury. In 2011, skateboard-related injuries accounted for more than 78,000 emergency room visits among children and adolescents (19 years old or younger).

Age Recommendations

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children under age 5 years should not ride skateboards. Children aged 6 to 10 years old need close supervision from an adult whenever they ride a skateboard.

Skateboarding is a special risk for young children because they have:

- A higher center of gravity, less development, and poor balance. These factors make children more likely to fall and hurt their heads
- Slower reactions and less coordination than adults. Children are less able to "break" (slow down) their falls
- Less skill and ability than they think. Children overestimate their skills and abilities, and are inexperienced in judging speed, traffic, and other risks

Helmet Safety

To protect your head from injury, always wear a properly fitting helmet. Get a quality bicycle or multi-sport helmet. It should meet or exceed safety standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). A properly fitting helmet:

- Is worn flat on your head with the bottom edge parallel to the ground
- Sits low on your forehead
- Has side straps forming a "V" shape around each ear
- Has a buckle that fastens tightly]
- Has pads inside that you install or remove so the helmet fits snugly
- Does not move when you shake your head
- Does not interfere with movement, vision, or hearing
- Replace your helmet at least every 5 years, or when it is damaged or outgrown.

Choose A Safe Environment

Children are most at risk for injury when they skateboard near traffic or in places where it is possible to collide with motor vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, or other.

To improve skateboarding safety, use supervised skateboard parks with professionally designed "bowls" and "ramps" located away from motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

- Avoid skateboarding on irregular surfaces. Inspect surfaces for cracks, rocks, and other debris
- Do not use homemade skateboard ramps
- Never use your skateboard in wet weather
- Don't skateboard in crowded walkways or in dark
- Never hold onto the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard

Ensure Appropriate Equipment

There are different types of skateboards for styles of riding, such as slalom, freestyle, and speed. Some boards are rated for the user's weight. Use a quality skateboard that is appropriate for your level of ability and the type of riding you do. Skateboards have three parts: the deck (the board itself), the trucks (the mechanism to which wheels are attached), and the wheels. Shorter decks are best for beginners because they are easier to balance and handle.

Be sure to keep your skateboard in good working order. You should inspect it before every ride. Look for problems that need repair, such as:

- Sharp edges on metal boards
- A slippery top surface
- Wheels with nicks and cracks
- Get professional help to repair serious defects

Focus On Technique

- Learn the basic skills of skateboarding, especially how to stop, slow down, and turn
- Be able to fall safely: If you are losing your balance, crouch down on the skateboard so that you will not have as far to fall. Try to land on the fleshy parts of your body rather than your arms. Relax and roll
- Skateboard according to your ability level Skateboarding skill is not acquired quickly or easily. Do not take chances by skateboarding faster than your experience allows, or faster than is safe for the surrounding conditions
- Practice and master each skill before moving on to a more challenging trick
- Staying in good physical condition can help to prevent skateboarding injuries

Additional Safety Tips

- Practice tricks and jumps in a controlled environment, such as a skate park that has adult supervision and appropriate access to emergency medical care
- Be considerate of fellow skateboarders, especially those who are younger and/or less skilled. Take turns on ramps or other equipment
- Do not use headphones while skateboarding
- Never put more than one person on a skateboard.
- Skateboarding accidents happen, so you should always know what to do in emergency situations. Call 911 for medical assistance or an ambulance

Common Skateboarding Injuries

On average, about 52% of skateboard injuries involve children under age 15. Most of the children injured are boys (average 85%). Many injuries happen when a child loses balance, falls off the skateboard and lands on an outstretched arm. Skateboarding injuries often involve the wrist, ankle, or face.

- Injuries to the arms, legs, neck and trunk range from cuts and bruises to sprains, strains, and broken bones. Wrist fractures are quite common. Wearing wrist guards can reduce the frequency and severity of these fractures.
- Facial injuries, such as a broken nose or jawbone, are also common.
- Severe injuries include concussion and other head injuries.

The Trauma Team at Rideout

Rideout Regional Medical Center was designated a Level III Trauma Center in 2001, by the Sierra-Sacramento Valley Emergency Medical Services Agency. Trauma patients in the counties of Yuba, Sutter, Colusa, Nevada and parts of Butte and Placer Counties can be transported and treated at Rideout within the so-called Golden Hour, those first 60 to 90 minutes that are so critical to preventing death and preserving brain function, heart muscle and, ultimately, the patient's quality of life after recovery. Rideout's multidisciplinary trauma team includes Board-certified specialists in emergency medicine, anesthesiology, trauma surgery, orthopedics, cardiothoracic and neurosurgery, specialized nursing staff, radiology, lab, intensive care and physical rehabilitation, all working together using proven treatment protocols that comply with the standards of the American College of Surgeons, the national organization that oversees the verification of trauma centers across the U.S.

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