

Cycling-Related Hospitalizations in Saskatchewan Children

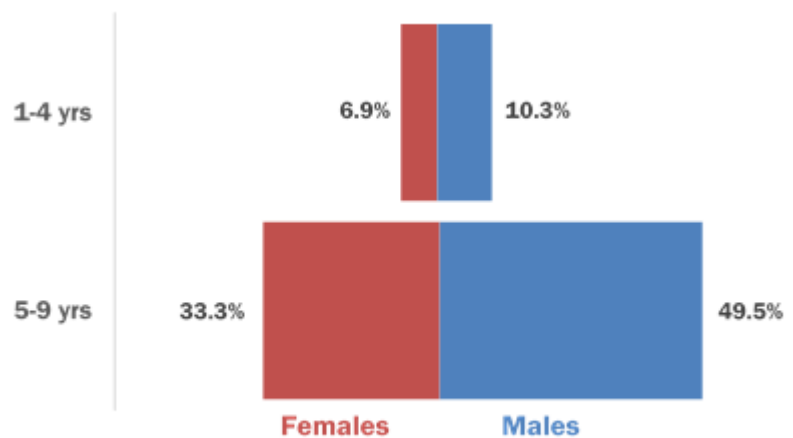
10 Years in Review (2004 – 2013)



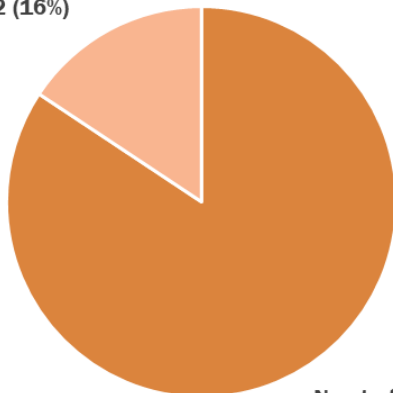
Facts About Cycling

Between 2004 and 2013, 204 children between the ages of 1 and 9 years were hospitalized due to cycling-related injuries.¹ Cycling was the 4th leading cause of injury-related hospitalization among children between the ages of 5 and 9 years.

The children most likely to be hospitalized due to cycling-related injuries were **males** between the ages of 5 and 9 years.



Traffic-related
32 (16%)



Non-traffic-related
172 (84%)

The majority of these hospitalizations were **non-traffic related** (172 hospitalizations) and included falling off of a bicycle or striking a stationary object. The remaining hospitalizations were related to traffic, including being struck by a motor vehicle.

The majority of hospitalizations were due to upper and lower extremity fractures, followed by traumatic brain injuries (e.g., concussions and internal head injuries).

¹ These numbers only include the children who were hospitalized due to falls. Children who were seen in emergency rooms or medical clinics, and those who did not receive medical treatment, are not included in these numbers. These numbers also do not include sports-related falls or playground-related falls.

Preventing Cycling-Related Injuries

Learning to ride a bicycle is a complex skill. Children will be awkward when they are first learning to ride, and it is likely that they will have some falls. Scrapes and bruises are part of learning how to ride a bike. It is important to focus prevention efforts on preventing serious injuries that can have life-long impacts (e.g., head/neck injuries). It is vital that children wear a properly fitted, approved helmet for every ride.

Developmental Stages and Cycling-Related Injuries

- Children are not just small adults. Children are developing physically and mentally and have many characteristics that make them vulnerable near traffic (e.g., difficulty determining the direction of sounds, poorer peripheral vision, impulsivity, distractibility). Young children should always cycle with an adult or an experienced, responsible child, particularly when cycling in traffic.
- Balance, strength, and coordination are necessary to safely ride a bike. Children grow rapidly in spurts and often do not have accurate awareness of their body size, abilities, and limitations. This can increase their risk of falling while on a bike. Their developing motor skills also reduce their ability to avoid obstacles (e.g., potholes, pedestrians, other cyclists). While children are learning to ride, it is a good idea to practice on a soft surface, away from traffic and other hazards.
- In order to cycle safely in traffic, children must be able to balance their bike, signal, and pay attention to traffic all at the same time. This combination of physical and cognitive skills takes practice and develops gradually between 10 and 14 years of age.

Other Tips

- Teach children the 2V1 rule for helmet fit (see images below). Children love to imitate the adults around them. Be a good role model – wear a helmet for every ride and follow the rules of the road.



- Teach children safe cycling skills, including the rules of the road (e.g., hand signals for stopping and turning) and making themselves visible (e.g., bright colours, bicycle reflectors, lights).

For more information about cycling safety, including resources and activity sheets for children, see <http://skprevention.ca/safety/bike-and-wheel-safety/>. For more information about cycling and other top causes of injury-related hospitalizations for Saskatchewan children and youth, please refer to the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's report, *Child and Youth Injury in Saskatchewan 2004-2013* (see www.skprevention.ca, search 4-007).

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