

Fall-Related Hospitalizations in Saskatchewan Children

10 Years in Review (2004 – 2013)

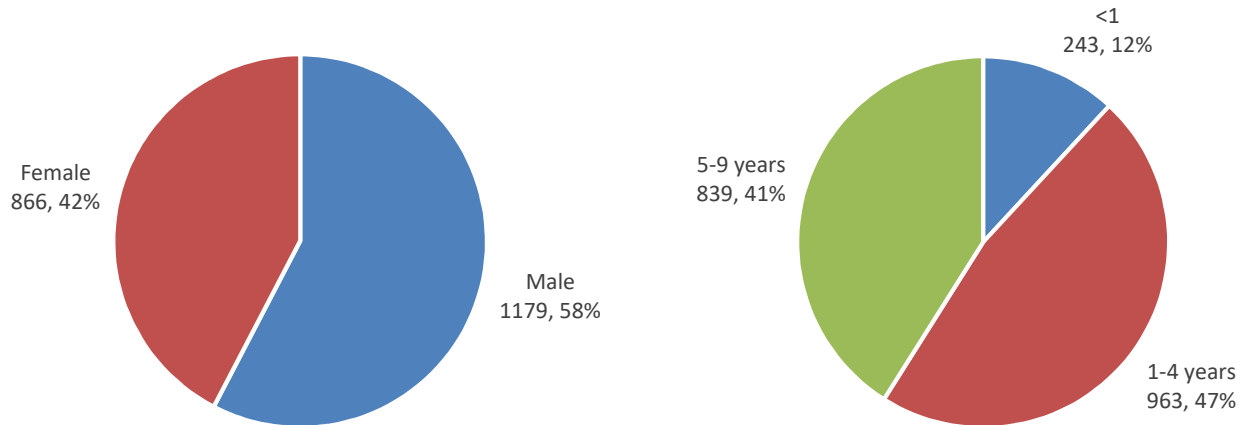


Facts About Falls

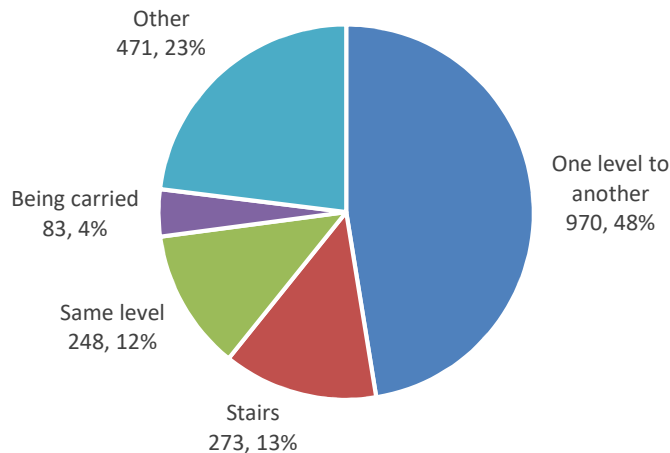
Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations for Saskatchewan children under the age of 10. Between 2004 and 2013, 2,045 children under the age of 10 were hospitalized due to falls.¹

Falls accounted for 45 per cent of all injury-related hospitalizations among children under the age of 10.

The children most likely to be hospitalized due to a fall were males between the ages of 1 and 4 years.



Falls from one level to another were responsible for almost half of all fall-related hospitalizations. These included falls from beds, chairs, and other furniture; falls from trees; and falls from diving or jumping into water.



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 Fall-Related Injuries

At each stage of development, children learn new skills (e.g., reaching, rolling, crawling, climbing, walking, exploring, and imitating the actions of others). It is important to look for the possible risks associated with each stage. Active supervision and the use of safety equipment (e.g., straps on high chairs and swings, safety gates for stairs) are vital to reducing the risk of fall-related injuries.

Developmental Stages and Fall-Related Injuries

- Infants' and young children's heads are large and heavy compared to the rest of their bodies, making serious injuries from falls more possible (e.g., head and neck injuries).
- Even before babies can roll over, they can wiggle around and move their arms and legs. It is important to always keep a hand on your baby when he is placed on a high surface to keep him from falling off (e.g., change table, bed, couch). This becomes even more important once your baby is able to roll from side to side.
- Once babies are able to push up on their hands and knees (before they are crawling or pulling themselves up on furniture), lower the crib mattress to the lowest position to prevent them from falling over the railing. Move children into a bed once they are able to climb out or are taller than 90 cm (35 inches).
- As children become more mobile, they are able to move towards stairs and open windows and are able to climb furniture. Keep doors and windows closed and locked, move furniture away from windows that are opened often, and use wall-mounted baby gates at the bottom and top of stairs to help prevent fall-related injuries. Remove stair gates once your child's chin is at the top of the gate to prevent a fall; your child may try to climb over the gate.

Other Tips

- Be sure to buckle the straps tightly whenever you place your child in a stroller, high chair, kitchen booster, or activity swing (and any other toys/furniture items that have safety straps).
- Infant car seats are unsteady and can easily fall from high places, especially if your child is moving around. Place car seats on the floor, not on high surfaces.
- If you use a baby sling or front carrier, make sure it fits your baby properly. It should support the head and shoulders, and it should have small leg openings so your baby cannot slip out. If you bend over, hold your baby against you with one hand so she won't fall.
- Use latches on drawers to prevent your child from opening the drawers and using them to climb onto the counters.

For more information about how to prevent falls and other injuries at each of the different developmental stages, see www.preventchildinjury.ca.

Playground-Related Falls

Between 2004 and 2013, 879 children under the age of 10 were hospitalized due to playground-related falls. When the type of playground equipment was reported, the most common type of playground equipment that children fell on or from was trampolines (33%), followed by monkey bars (30%) and slides (10%).

80 per cent of playground-related falls that resulted in hospitalization occurred among children between the ages of 5 and 9 years.

Playground Safety Tips

Playgrounds give children the opportunity to play and interact with other children. They also allow children to take risks, try new things, and develop new skills. The following tips can help prevent fall-related injuries at the playground. As with all child-related injuries, active adult supervision is the most important method of prevention.

- Surfaces around playgrounds should be soft (e.g., pea gravel, sand, wood chips, shredded rubber).
- Children under the age of 5 should not play on surfaces higher than 5 feet off the ground.
- Equipment above the ground should have handrails and guardrails.
- Teach your child to use safe play habits including taking turns, not pushing, going feet first down the slide, sitting on swings and slides, and looking before jumping.
- Active play (also known as risky play) is important for children's development and overall health. Teach your children to recognize the difference between risk and hazard. Allow your children to build confidence by developing new skills and learning their limits.

For more information about active play (also known as risky play), see <https://outsideplay.ca>.

For more information about falls 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).