

New study: More than 20,000 sledding injuries each year

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Although sledding is a popular winter pastime, it can unfortunately lead to serious injury. A new study conducted by the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital found that from 1997-2007, an estimated 229,023 children and adolescents younger than 19 years were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments for sledding-related injuries - an average of more than 20,000 cases each year.

According to the study, being released online August 23 and appearing in the September issue of *Pediatrics*, the most common injuries were fractures (26 percent), followed by cuts and bruises (25 percent). The study also revealed that the majority of injuries occurred during a collision (51 percent), and that collisions were more likely to result in a [traumatic brain injury](#) (TBI) than other mechanisms of injury. Overall, the head was the most commonly injured body part (34 percent). While the majority of injuries occurred at a place of sports or recreation (52 percent) or on private property (31 percent), patients that were injured while sledding on a street or highway were more likely to sustain injuries to the head, diagnosed with a TBI and hospitalized than were patients injured in other locations.

"Two of the main factors that contribute to sledding-related injuries are the environment and locale," said study co-author, Lara McKenzie, PhD, principal investigator in the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital. "To reduce the risk of injury, sledding areas should be clear of trees and other obstacles and should have

sufficient run-out areas away from streets. In addition, sledding on streets and highways should be avoided to prevent collisions with motor vehicles and other traffic."

The use of motorized vehicles to pull sleds was another finding of particular concern. More than one-third of the injuries sustained while being pulled by a vehicle were [fractures](#).

"Our findings indicate that the prevalence of this activity may be much greater and the practice more common than previously thought," said McKenzie, also a faculty member at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. "Given the potential for serious injury, children should never ride a sled that is being pulled by a motorized vehicle of any type including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), snowmobiles, cars, trucks, tractors, motorcycles, dirt bikes and lawn mowers."

Provided by Nationwide Children's Hospital

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