

THINKFIRST CANADA'S SKATEBOARDING INJURY PREVENTION TIPS

Skateboarding has risen in popularity at an incredible rate, so too have the number of injuries. That's why it's important to take preventative measures to reduce the number of both catastrophic and non-catastrophic injuries. Here are ThinkFirst Canada's top tips for reducing your risk of sustaining an injury while skateboarding. This information is taken from Chapter 30 "Skateboarding" in the ThinkFirst book entitled *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports and Recreation: Causes and Prevention – A Canadian Study* edited by Charles H. Tator and published by the University of Toronto Press in 2008.

TOP TIPS:

- Children under 5 years of age should not skateboard, and children between the ages of 5-10 should always be supervised.
- Acquire proper balance and coordination before attempting to skateboard.
- Avoid skateboarding on city streets, public sidewalks, and parking lots. Skateboard only in supervised, specially designed skateboarding parks.
- Always wear protective equipment – helmet, wristguards, elbow pads, and knee pads. We recommend a skateboard helmet.
- Never skateboard in darkness or wet weather.
- Don't skateboard faster than your experience allows or faster than the conditions permit. Complicated tricks require practice in a specially designed area.
- Only skateboard when in good physical condition. Do stretching and conditioning exercises before and after skateboarding.
- While skateboarding, if you lose your balance, crouch down on the skateboard to reduce the height of the fall, and try to land on the fleshy parts of the body. Try to relax your body during a fall, and try to roll instead of absorbing the force with your arms.
- Do not get towed by bicycles or motor vehicles.

Risk Factors to Consider

Age: In the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008) all of the catastrophic injuries were sustained by those under 20 years of age.

Experience: The less experienced a skateboarder is the more prone they are to injury.

Environmental Hazards: According to the ThinkFirst-Tator study (2008) irregular riding surfaces account for over half of the skateboarding injuries due to a fall.

Skateboards: According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission report, slightly over 1% of skateboarding injuries are directly connected to problems with the skateboard.

Protective equipment: Protective equipment, including a helmet, can help reduce the number and severity of injuries as they absorb the impact of the fall.

Choosing a Skateboard

Look for these safety features when choosing a skateboard:

- Beginners should look for shorter decks, as these are easier to balance and handle.
- Choose a wider board to maximize your support. Cover the deck with a non-skid surface to get better traction and control.
- Look for laminated boards which are generally considered safer than plastic ones because plastic ones frequently break.
- Wider trucks will provide better stability and vibration absorption, as well, larger wheels with rounded edges provide better control.
- Make sure the bearings are singly or doubly sealed to prevent them from falling out and dirt from entering the bearing housing.

Remember: thinkfirst.ca before you play!