

## Other safety tips

- Skateboard within your limits.
- Complicated tricks require careful practice in a specially designed area. Build up to complicated tricks in stages. Always wear full protective equipment when trying new tricks.
- Drink before you get thirsty. Drink water regularly when skateboarding in hot weather. Take breaks in the shade.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen. Re-apply regularly.
- Always let someone know where you are going, and how long you will be gone for.
- Children under the age of 10 should be supervised by an adult at all times.



Photograph by Elizabeth Oswald, courtesy of the City of Melbourne



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SMARTPLAY

# Preventing Skateboarding Injuries



Facts and Safety Tips  
for Skateboarders

Photograph by Elizabeth Oswald,  
courtesy of the City of Melbourne



Victoria  
The Place To Be

## Facts on skateboarding injuries

Skateboarding is a popular recreational and fitness activity among children, adolescents and young adults. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey, Children's participation in cultural and leisure activities conducted in April 2003, reported that 604,500 Australian children aged 5-14 years participated in skateboarding or in-line skating outside of school hours in the two weeks prior to the survey.

### How many injuries?

- Victorian hospital admissions and emergency department data shows that there were at least 3,020 presentations for skateboarding injury over the three-year period July 2001-June 2004.
- Males accounted for over 75% of skateboarders treated in Victorian hospitals.
- A high proportion (65%) of injured skateboarders were 10-17 year olds.

### The causes and types of injuries

- The major cause of skateboarding injuries was falls (90%).
- Both beginners and also experienced skateboarders trying new tricks are most at risk of injury.
- Over half of skateboarding injuries were to the upper extremity (55%, including wrist/forearm fractures, wrist sprains and hand/finger fractures), followed by the lower extremity (25%, including knee and lower leg fractures and ankle sprains) and 11% were to the head, face and neck.
- Wrist injuries are common with falling skateboarders typically putting out their hands in an attempt to break a fall, landing on an outstretched arm onto a hard surface. Ankle sprains are also a common skateboarding injury.

## Safety tips for skateboarders

### Good preparation is important

- Warm up and cool down before and after skateboarding sessions.
- Make sure your skateboard is suited to your size and the type of skating you want to do. Check and maintain your board regularly, especially the condition of the wheels. Give it a safety check before each skateboarding session.

### Good technique and practices will help prevent injury

- Beginners should take lessons from a qualified coach/instructor to develop balance, good technique and bailing skills. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises that children under the age of five should never ride a skateboard and that children aged 6-10 years need supervision when skateboarding.
- Learn how to fall. If you lose your balance crouch down on the skateboard so you do not have to fall so far. If you fall, try to land on your shoulder and roll rather than putting your arm and hand out to break the fall. Kick the board out from under your feet.
- Advanced skaters wanting to learn new tricks would also benefit from lessons/coaching sessions.



Photograph provided by GOYA 551

### Wear the right protective equipment

- Always wear protective equipment such as a helmet, wrist guards, kneepads, elbow pads and closed slip-resistant shoes. Protective equipment can absorb the impact of a fall and reduce the number and severity of injuries.
- Protective equipment should fit comfortably but firmly so it does not slide out of position.
- Choose a hybrid skateboarding helmet that also meets the Australian Standard for bicycle helmets.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing if skateboarding in the evening or on overcast days. Do not skateboard at night.

### Check skate environment for hazards

- Skate in skateparks wherever possible and keep off roads or streets.
- Obey the local laws on where you can and cannot skate.
- Before skateboarding check the riding surface or ground for holes and bumps and clear the area of stones, broken glass and other debris. Report any hazards in skateparks to the local council or the manager of the park.
- When starting a skating session in a skatepark, check the ramps, rails and other pieces of equipment to make sure they are safe and secure.
- Watch for a while to check how other participants (skateboarders, in-line skaters and BMX riders) are using the equipment and slot in only when it is safe to do so. Observe the skater code of conduct.
- Local government and communities should continue to develop local skateparks that conform to skate facility safe design and maintenance guidelines.