

Small-wheeled Devices:

Skateboards, Inline skates, Roller skates and Micro-Scooters

Injury Surveillance data from Princess Margaret Hospital Emergency Department shows:

- Approximately 1000 children sustain injuries as a result of "sports or leisure" activities each year
- A third of these presentations involved rollerblades, skateboards or roller-skates
- In November 2001 alone 11 children presented for injuries from scooters (Micro-scooters)

Falls are the most common cause of injuries so far with these new products, although there have been reports of injuries resulting from collisions with other people and objects.

How injuries occur

Most falls are the result of simple loss of control.

- Injury to the hand, wrist and elbow occur as the rider puts out a hand to break their fall.
- Knee injuries occur if the rider falls forward and is not wearing kneepads.
- Head injuries occur when helmetless riders are unable to break their fall or hit objects nearby – they are less common than other injuries but are usually the most serious.

WA Road Rules

Roller skaters, skateboarders, and scooter riders are permitted to use footpaths and shared paths. They must keep to the left and give-way to pedestrians.

On shared paths, scooters, inline skates and skateboards have right of way over bicycles.

Scooters, roller blades, inline-skaters and skate boarders can use roads but

- Only in daylight hours
- On local roads that do not have white lines or median islands
- On roads with speed limit of 60kmph
- Must keep to the left

Kidsafe WA recommends that small wheels devices not be used on the road because:

- Of their inadequate braking mechanisms
- Increased risk of injury

Where else can I skate?

Identify safe and legal venues, which may be on private property, or venues specifically set aside for skating.

Check with the local council for skate parks in the area.

There are also a large number of indoor skating facilities such as roller domes in many suburbs. For further information contact the Department of Sport and Recreation www.dsr.wa.gov.au

Micro Scooter Design

- The **small wheels and low clearance** make the rider more likely to lose control on an uneven surface. Scooters, with larger wheels and pneumatic rubber tyres are more stable.
- The **braking system** is intended to work by downward pressure applying friction to the back wheel. This often does not work at all, especially in cheaper models, and becomes less effective with age. Friction applied to a small wheel using a curved surface is unlikely to be very efficient.
- **Folding mechanisms and construction.** These can be well made but often are not and Kidsafe WA is concerned that they may fold under pressure or after some wear.
 - Some mechanisms can only be tightened using fingers
 - Some wheels are poorly attached
 - Some have sharp edges
- Kidsafe WA is concerned that the **combination of speed, poor braking mechanism** and the **balance required** make it difficult for new riders to manage. This is similar to the experience with other products such as "roller-blades".



Scooter Checklist

- Check the brakes and the locking mechanism
- Check for sharp objects and edges
- Make sure the steering column locks easily and does not collapse or is too short causing the rider to stoop
- Handlebar grips must be secure and not swivel
- High ground clearance
- Non slip foot-boards
- Larger brake pads/ mudguard with a larger area to press down on to operate the brake

Safety Equipment for Small Wheels

Helmets are the most important piece of safety equipment. They protect a child from the most serious injury - to the head. Studies of cyclists show that a helmet reduces the risk of brain injury by around 90%. To be effective a helmet has to be **well fitting and** has to be used! Parents need to make it clear to children that helmets are to be **used every time**.

Choosing a helmet

1. Ideally the helmet should have a low back to protect the back of the head. It is recommended that you purchase a low back helmet that has been manufactured to the AS/NZS 2063. Examples are the Extreme Stackhat and Xport by Rosebank.
2. If you already own a bicycle helmet that meets the AS/NZS 2063 then use this every time.

Helmet fit

- Measure the child's head before purchasing in order to select the correct size.
- The helmet should fit firmly on the head with the chinstrap securely fastened.
- Do the push test once fastened. If the helmet can be pushed back and forwards then it won't protect the front or the back of the head in a fall. The helmet is too big

Helmet maintenance

- Do not leave helmets in direct sunlight or hot cars
- Wash with lightly soapy water
- Helmets are designed to absorb the impact of a fall by breaking up. Damage may not be visible. So if a helmet has had a hard fall it needs to be destroyed and replaced.

Other features to consider

- Light weight
- Good ventilation, large and deep air ventilation at the front and back
- Easy to use chin strap
- Conspicuous in colour eg. yellow or fluorescent in colour; use reflective tape on dark helmets

Safety is Simple

1. Avoid poorly made products
2. Purchase and use protective equipment, helmet and wrist, elbow and knee guards.
3. Learn to ride and practice in a safe place such as a dual footpath away from roads, driveways and slopes.
4. Use in a safe manner-pedestrians have right of way so keep left and give way

Visibility

Items that increase visibility to road users, to pedestrians and to vehicles are vital to child safety. Bright coloured clothing, reflective tape, reflectors, flashing lights and visibility flags are all useful in this regard. Young children and new users should not be using these wheeled devices in poor light or near traffic.

Wrist guards

- Wrist Guards are designed to strengthen the wrist to reduce the risk of serious damage or broken bones.
- A child losing their balance and putting out their hand to break their fall is a common occurrence, and broken wrists or arms are the most frequent serious injury among skateboard riders, roller bladers and now micro-scooter users.
- Serious injury can happen quickly and easily.

Knee and elbow guards

- These are designed to protect vulnerable points that research has shown are common points of contact when children fall.
- They are very important for skateboarding - skateboarders and roller-bladers commonly land on their elbows and knees. This type of fall is also likely to happen with micro scooter users.

Scooter/Skating Safety lessons

A roller drome offers a smooth scoot ride away from roads. Check with your local roller drome or Skate Centre to find out if they offer lessons. Learning how to fall safely is critical in reducing the risk of injury. If you feel like you are going to fall:

1. Bend your knees and get lower to the ground
2. Fall sideways
3. Get ready to stop and put the weight onto the heel stop, and
4. Fall onto your protective guards. For some good tips on safety and "how to" try visiting this website www.mysportsguru.com



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For more information ☎ (08) 9340 8509

Child Safety Information Line ☎ 1800 802 244

Poisons Information Centre ☎ 13 11 26

www.kidsafewa.com.au