

## Skateboarding and Scooter Riding Safety

Skateboarding and scooter riding have become very popular pastimes. Each year in the United States about 50,000 emergency room visits are caused by skateboarding injuries. Approximately 1500 children and adolescents require hospitalization from skateboard injuries. Most hospital admissions involve head injuries. These injuries can result in permanent disabilities.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics children less than 5 years of age should never ride a skateboard. They do not have the physical skills and thinking ability a person needs to ride a skateboard safely. Children aged 6 to 10 years old need to be supervised by a responsible party. **Younger children have much slower reaction time and they also have poor judgment of speed and traffic. Also their balance is not fully developed.**

Inexperienced skateboarders, those that have been riding less than one week, suffer one third of all injuries. Every skateboarder should wear standard safety gear. This includes helmet, wrist guards, elbow and knee pads and appropriate shoes.

Wrist fractures are quite common in skateboarding. Wrist guards reduce the frequency and severity of these types of injuries. Facial injuries, like fractures of the jaw and nose are also fairly common. It's important for children to wear a helmet that covers most of their forehead.

Headphones should not be used while skateboarding. Never have more than one person on a skateboard. Never hold on to a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard or "skitching".

Use a quality skateboard. One with a shorter deck, the board itself, is easier for beginners to handle. Many are rated based on the rider's weight. Inspect the board before using it. Look for cracks or chips in the wheels. Have a professional repair or replace serious defects.