

Media Release



 The Sydney children's
Hospitals Network



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Trauma experts' warning: up to 75 per cent of children's head injuries could be prevented

Trauma experts from Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick and The Children's Hospital at Westmead are urging families to spread the message of helmet safety in all settings, from the family home to the park.

It comes following a recent spike in the number of children admitted with preventable head injuries after falling from a pushbike, skateboard, scooter or motorbike – up to 75 per cent of these children were not wearing a helmet and were injured in a range of private and public settings including in the family driveway and skate and recreation parks.

In the past year, the two hospitals, both part of The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, have between them seen approximately 80 children admitted with head injuries due to these type of falls. 75 per cent of scooter and skateboard riders and 55 per cent of bike riders were caught out not wearing helmets.

"Helmets play an important role in keeping kids safe. There is a big difference in the severity of injury when children fall with and without a helmet. The majority of children who do not wear helmets sustain more serious injuries, like skull fractures and brain bleeds. While those children who do wear helmets usually present with minor head injuries, like concussions," said Dr Donovan Dwyer, Head of Trauma at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

"We can fix your bones, but we may not always be able to fix your brains' is a take-home message."

For more information, please contact:

Nikkie Beltran, Public Affairs, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick on (02) 9382 4818
Sarah Palmer, Public Relations, The Children's Hospital at Westmead on (02) 9845 0512
or after hours on (02) 9382 1111

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The impact of a significant head injury is often longstanding, can be permanent and can result in a longer hospital stay and a challenging rehabilitation process for the child and family. It is for this reason that prevention methods, like the use of helmets when riding bikes, are vital.

“There is a misconception that speed has to be part of the mechanism, and is often why children do not wear helmets, but significant impact and head injuries often result from a stationary fall onto a hard surface, like the driveway,” said Dr Mary McCaskill, Medical Director of the Emergency Department at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

“Whether children are playing for a short time in the backyard or driveway, or playing in the park for a lengthy period, it is important that parents and carers remain vigilant about helmet safety. It is valuable to get into these good safety habits early.”

Outdoor activity and sport are essential for growth, development and health and The Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network supports this while encouraging families to take all necessary precautions to prevent injury from occurring, such as the use of helmets.

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Dr Dwyer and Dr McCaskill are available for interview on the spike in admissions and importance of helmet safety, however will not be able to provide comment on any individual patients.

All individual requests for condition updates must first go through the Public Relations departments at Sydney Children’s Hospital, Randwick or The Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

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