

# Skateboarding and In-line Skating

**A**lthough skateboarding and in-line skating were once considered extreme sports, they are now both very common activities for children. Skateboarding and in-line skating involve street skating (using public areas such as sidewalks, steps, handrails, and curbs) or skate parks designed specifically for these sports.

With the growing popularity of skateboarding and in-line skating comes a greater number of injuries. However, the risk of injury can be reduced with taking lessons, use of safety gear including helmets, and following the rules of the road.

The following is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about types of skateboards and skates and how to prevent injuries. Also included is an overview of common skateboarding and in-line skating injuries.

## Types of skateboards and skates

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**Skateboards** are a deck or board with 2 sets of wheels attached to the deck by trucks. There are several different types of boards, ranging from long boards to smaller vert or street boards.

**Caster boards** are 2 decks or boards connected by a beam with a spring in the middle and one wheel attached to each deck by a truck. Rotating the boards back and forth propels the board. One brand of caster board is called RipStik.

**In-line skates**, often called roller blades, are roller skates with the wheels in a line as opposed to side by side. This allows for faster speeds and sharper turns. In-line skates can be used for hockey, freestyle skating, racing, fitness training, recreation, aggressive skating, and cross-training for sports such as skiing. There are different skates for each of these uses. (Note: Heelies should be considered skates and not shoes.)

**Scooters** are a combination of skateboards with a single wheel at the front and back of the board and a handle connected to the front wheel for steering.

## Injury prevention and safety tips

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- **Technique.** Athletes should learn and practice safe techniques for performing the skills that are integral to their sport. One-third of skateboard injuries happen in the first week of learning the sport. Beginners may find it helpful to take a class to learn the basics, including how to fall properly.
- **Equipment.** All skaters, no matter how much experience they have, should always wear the proper safety gear.
  - **Skates** that fit properly. They should be checked regularly to make sure they fit and are in good condition. Wheels should be free of debris and replaced if worn out.
  - **Helmets** that fit properly and are certified for safety. (Unfortunately most in-line skaters do not wear safety gear, and more than 10,000 in-line skaters suffer from head or face injuries yearly.)
  - **Elbow pads**, which can reduce injuries by 80%.
  - **Knee pads**, which can reduce injuries by 30%.
  - **Wrist guards**, which can reduce injuries by almost 90%.
- **Environment.** Most young skateboarders are injured on public roads or sidewalks and in parking lots.

Rules of the Road

  - Be aware of other skaters, walkers, runners, cyclists, and cars that use the same areas, and use caution when skating around them.
  - Skate on the right side of sidewalks, bike paths, and trails. Pass on the left as cars do. Don't pass without warning, and only when you have enough room to pass safely.
  - Avoid skating in the street in crowded areas. Be especially careful when crossing the street. Remember, all traffic rules must be obeyed.
  - Watch for changes in trails or street conditions, such as water, potholes, cracks, rocks, or other debris. Do not skate on wet or oily surfaces. When in doubt, slow down.
  - Follow skate park rules and don't skate where it is not allowed. Public places often forbid skating in high-use areas because of the risk of collisions. (Many injuries happen in skate parks, especially in the ramp and bar areas.)
  - Before using any trail, make sure you know how to turn, control your speed, and stop.
  - Never put more than one person on a skateboard.
  - Children younger than 5 years should not ride skateboards. Children aged 6 to 10 years should have close adult supervision when skateboarding.
  - "Skitching" (holding on to the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard or in-line skates) should never be done.

## Common injuries

Injuries from skating and skateboarding are common and are usually caused by falls and collisions with other objects. Many of these injuries are fractures or sprains to the wrists and ankles. Severe injuries, including death, can occur and are often the result of head or chest injuries from a collision with a car.

### Ankle injuries

Ankle sprains are a common skateboarding or in-line skating injury and can prevent athletes from being able to skate. Ankle sprains are more likely to happen if an athlete had a previous sprain, especially a recent one.

Treatment begins with rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE). Athletes should see a doctor as soon as possible if they cannot walk on the injured ankle or have severe pain. X-rays may be needed.

Regular icing (20 minutes) helps with pain and swelling. Weight bearing and exercises to regain range of motion, strength, and balance are key factors to getting back to sports. Tape and ankle braces can prevent or reduce the frequency of ankle sprains. Tape and an ankle brace can also support the ankle, enabling an athlete to return to activity more quickly.

### Wrist injuries

Wrist injuries often result when athletes fall onto the arms without appropriate protection. Athletes may have pain with use and loss of range of motion.

Treatment begins with RICE. Athletes should see a doctor if their wrists are swollen or painful the next day. X-rays may be needed.

## Head injuries

Concussions occur if the head or neck hits the ground after collision with another person or object. A concussion is any injury to the brain that disrupts normal brain function on a temporary or permanent basis.

The signs and symptoms of a concussion range from subtle to obvious and usually happen right after the injury but may take hours to days to show up. Athletes who have had concussions may report feeling normal before their brain has fully recovered. With most concussions, the player is *not* knocked out or unconscious.

Prematurely returning to play after a concussion can lead to another concussion or even death. An athlete with a history of concussion is more susceptible to another injury than an athlete with no history of concussion.

**All concussions are serious, and all athletes with suspected concussions should not return to play until they see a doctor.**

## Remember

Skateboarding and in-line skating injuries can be prevented when athletes use the appropriate safety equipment and safety guidelines are followed.

## NOTES

Products and brand names are mentioned for informational purposes only. Inclusion in this publication does not imply endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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