



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Injury Prevention Focus of Two National Reports

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BURLINGTON - Unintentional injury is the number one killer nationally and in Vermont for children from birth to age 19, according to a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vital Signs report.

A second report published in May by The Trust for America's Health (The Facts Hurt: A State-by-State Injury Prevention Policy Report) show injuries caused by accidents and violence are the third leading cause of death nationally for children and adults.

The report ranks Vermont's injury rate among the worst 38th out of 51 states/territories.

"Most injuries are preventable," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "The CDC report shows a 30 percent decline in deaths from unintentional injuries, and this is encouraging. But we must do more for our children. When we look at Vermont, especially striking are the numbers of prescription drug poisonings among teens, and suffocation of infants too often due to unsafe sleeping arrangements."

The CDC report shows fatal unintentional injury trends by cause and by state for children from birth to 19 years. The Trust for America's Health report measured overall injury rates and leading causes nationwide.

The most common cause of death from unintentional injury for children is motor vehicle crashes, followed by suffocation, drowning, poisoning, fires and falls.

Each year, nearly 20 young Vermonters lose their lives to injuries. For teens the most common cause of death is motor vehicle crashes. Approximately 12 young people die in motor vehicle crashes every year. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for young people who are between the ages of 10 and 24. On average, nine young Vermonters take their own lives every year.

Teenagers are also more likely than any other age group to be harmed by poisoning, largely due to an increase in unsafe prescription drug use. Poisoning was one of the major causes of hospitalizations in Vermont in 2008 for ages 15 to 19.

Unintentional falls are the leading cause of hospitalizations for young people age 10 to 14, including injuries due to recreational activities.

Infants are at highest risk for suffocation from unsafe sleep environments every year.

Most injuries are preventable by taking everyday precautions:

- **Model safe driving behavior.** Do not drink and drive, do not drive while using mobile devices or other distractions, and always obey the posted speed limit.
- **Always use safety restraints.** Make sure seat belts, safety seats and booster seats are the correct size and positioned for a child's age and weight.
- **Wear a helmet.** Make sure that anyone using a bike, skateboard, skis, snowboard, scooter, ATV or snowmobile is wearing a helmet.
- **Childproof your home.** Be sure to install guardrails on bunk beds and safety gates at the tops and bottom of stairs. For information on childproofing:
http://www.fletcherallen.org/community_resources/injury_prevention/

- **Create a safe sleep environment.** Make sure babies sleep alone, placed on their backs on a firm surface. Make sure cribs meet safety standards. Don't use toys, loose bedding, or bumper pads in a crib. For full information on how to help your baby sleep safely: <http://healthvermont.gov/family/SUDI/index.aspx>
- **Be alert for prescription drug misuse and abuse.** Many people think that abusing prescription drugs is safer than abusing illicit drugs such as heroin. The majority of first-time or occasional prescription drug abusers are most likely to get their drugs from a friend or family member for free or without permission. For information on warning signs of drug abuse and interventions: <http://healthvermont.gov/adap/RxOTC Abuse.aspx>
- **Prevent youth suicide.** Keep open communication with your child, learn to recognize the warning signs of distress or anxiety, and know how to get help for your child: <http://www.umatterucangethelp.com/>

For more information on the CDC Vital Signs report visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/childinjury>

For a link to the Trust for America's Health study visit: <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/injury12/>

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