

# FACTSHEET



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## Wheeled recreational devices

### What are wheeled recreational devices?

Wheeled recreational devices include skateboards, foot powered scooters (scooters), roller skates and roller blades. These recreational items are very popular with children, young people and adults. While their movement and speed is powered by the user, they can travel quickly and are often used as a method of transport. Some scooters have a braking system but most devices rely on very basic user control systems for stopping or slowing the device.

### How are children injured?

#### Falls

- Most injuries occur from falls and collisions with fixed objects or pedestrians. This is usually the result of losing control. Children may lose control as a result of a sudden or unexpected obstacle in their riding path.
- Children may lose control because they are unable to stop. This is due to skateboards, rollerblades and roller skates not having brakes and scooters having limited braking capacity resulting from their small wheels.

#### Cuts, bruises, fractures and friction burns

- Children may sustain cuts, bruises, fractures and/or friction burns as a result of a crash/fall.

#### Motor vehicle accidents

- Serious injuries and fatalities can also result when children using the road are hit by motor vehicles.

### How common are these injuries?

In Australia, 24,458 children aged 0-16 years were admitted to hospital over a 10 year period (2002-2012) as a result of falls from ice skates, roller skates, skateboards, scooters and other pedestrian conveyances.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2016 and 2017, 233 children were admitted to the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network hospitals as a result of a fall of the same nature, making it the fourth most common reason for a fall related injury.<sup>2</sup>

At greatest risk are young children, learners and experienced users performing tricks at high speed.

The upper limbs and wrists are the most common areas of injury. Other areas include elbows, knees and the head.

#### Contributing factors to injuries are:

- speed
- obstacles
- being unable to stop
- steep slopes
- hard landing surfaces
- failure to wear protective equipment, such as helmets, knee pads, elbow pads, mouth guards and wrist guards

## What are the laws, regulations or standards for wheeled recreational devices?

There are no Australian Standards for these recreational items.

Although helmet use is not a legal requirement, it is highly recommended.

Helmets that meet the Australian Standard for bicycle helmets (AS/NZS 2063:2008) can be worn.<sup>3</sup>

Dedicated skateboard helmets are a better choice as they are designed to provide full coverage of the head including the lower back of the head. They are also constructed with solid material and include less or no ventilation, a feature necessary for bicycle helmets.

## Road laws

The NSW Centre for Road Safety advises that boards, skates and blades are best used in designated areas, such as ramps and skate parks. Skates may be used on footpaths, regardless of the age of the user, unless there are signs that say they are not to be used in those areas.

Riders or skaters should keep to the left when on footpaths and give way to others on the path.

Skateboards and scooters can only be used on minor roads (those with no lane lines marked) that have a maximum speed limit of 50km during daylight hours.

As powered scooters are unable to be registered, they can only be used on private land.<sup>4</sup>

## Remember:

- Children under five years of age should not use skateboards and scooters. Children between the ages of 6-10 years should always be supervised when skateboarding.
- Equipment should be checked for wear and tear prior to use.
- If you are using a second-hand recreational item, make sure that it is stable and in good condition.
- Skates and blades should be fitted correctly so that they feel comfortable but firm on the feet of the child.
- Helmets, wrist, elbow and knee guards should be worn.
- Bright or reflective clothing is recommended.
- Ensure learners have a safe area to practice.
- Use of designated skate parks and ramps is recommended.
- School aged or younger children should not use the equipment on the road.
- Supervision of learners is recommended until the child is skilled to use the recreational item safely.
- Do not allow children to go down steep slopes, in traffic or poor light.
- Young children, learners and experienced users performing tricks are at highest risk of injury.
- Avoid wet or rainy conditions.
- When riding on the footpath, be aware of pedestrians, especially the elderly.
- Check for products that have been recalled ([www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au)) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.

## References

1. Mitchell, R., Curtis, K., Foster, K., (2017). *A 10-year review of the characteristics and health outcomes of injury-related hospitalisations of children in Australia*. Day of Difference Foundation. University of Sydney: [http://www.paediatricinjuryoutcomes.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Australian-child-injury-report\\_FINAL-070617.pdf](http://www.paediatricinjuryoutcomes.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Australian-child-injury-report_FINAL-070617.pdf).
2. Kids Health Child Health Promotion Unit.(2019) *Injury-related hospital admissions to Sydney Children's Hospitals Network (2016-2017)*. Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. <https://kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/childhood-injury>
3. NSW Transport (2018, January 8) *Helmets and safety gear* <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/bicycle-riders/helmets-gear.html>
4. NSW Transport (2018, June 28) *Skate boards, foot scooters and rollerblades* <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/pedestrians/skateboard-footscootersandrollerblades/>