

# Injuries

## AMONG BC YOUTH

Injuries are one of the largest health problems facing youth in school and are the leading cause of death among young people. Most injuries are predictable and preventable and could be avoided with effective injury prevention programs that raise awareness and the use of safety equipment.

The Adolescent Health Survey asked youth about injuries they had received in the past 12 months that were serious enough to require medical attention. The good news is that the number of BC youth seriously injured has declined (34%, down from 39% in 1998).

Males are more likely to be injured than females (39% vs. 29%). Seventy-one percent of females reported having had no serious injuries compared to 61% of males. Males are also more likely to be seriously injured on more than one occasion with twice as many males as females (9% vs. 4%) reporting being seriously injured three or more times.

This fact sheet is one of a series on various health issues among BC youth, and may be copied for use as a handout. Data for the fact sheets were collected in the BC Adolescent Health Survey (2003), a 140-question survey completed by over 30,500 students in grades seven to twelve, in schools throughout BC. In all, 45 of BC's 59 school districts agreed to take part in the survey. The first Adolescent Health Survey was conducted in 1992, and the second in 1998. In total, more than 72,400 BC students have completed the survey over a ten-year period.

The Adolescent Health Surveys were conducted by the McCreary Centre Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of BC youth through research, information sharing, and community-based projects that address the unmet health needs of young people.

### How and where do injuries happen?

Sports activities are still the leading cause of serious injury among students. Of youth who were injured, 55% said their most serious injury happened playing or training for sports activities; 14% received their most serious injury cycling, roller-blading or skateboarding, up from 10% in 1998; 8% received their worst injury in a motor vehicle accident and 5% while they were fighting. Females are most likely to be injured at home (26%) whereas males are most likely to be injured at a sports or recreation area (22%).

Regionally, youth living in Greater Vancouver are the least likely to get injured (22%) and those living in the Kootenays the most likely (37%).

**How Youth Were Injured (of youth injured in past 12 months)**

	1998	2003
Sports or recreation activities	53%	55%
Biking, roller-blading, or skateboarding	10%	14%
Motor vehicle	8%	5%
Fighting	5%	5%
Other	23%	21%

### Binge drinking increases risk of injury

Binge drinking increases youth's risk of being seriously injured. Fifty-eight percent of males and 38% of females who were involved in binge drinking also reported they had been seriously injured. Although alarming, these figures are substantially lower than in 1998 when 64% of males and 47% of females who reported binge drinking had been seriously injured.



## Injury Prevention Strategies

Injuries continue to pose a significant health risk to youth, yet most injuries are preventable.

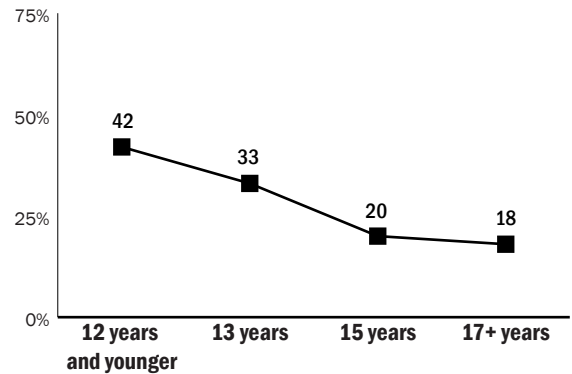
Seatbelt use among BC youth has not improved since 1998. Eighty-three percent wear a seatbelt most of the time, but only 53% wear one all the time, down from 58% in 1998.

Helmet use sharply increased from 6% in 1992 to 30% in 1998, possibly as a result of new legislation requiring the use of helmets, but has since declined to 25% in 2003. Helmet use decreases as youth get older with only 18% of youth 17 years and older saying they use a helmet when they ride a bike.

Encouragingly, 74% of BC youth with a driver's license say they never drink and drive, up from 64% in 1998. However, 11% of youth with a learner license acknowledge ever driving after drinking, 36% with a novice license, and 55% with a full license. Males are more likely than females to drive after using alcohol (14% vs. 10%). This is down from 1998 when 20% of males and 13% of females admitted to drinking and driving.

The Vancouver area has the fewest youth who drink and drive at 22%. However, there are encouraging reductions in every region across the province including the Capital Region where rates of youth who admitted to having driven after alcohol or drug use dropped from 35% in 1992 to 26% in 2003.

**Helmet Use by Age**



**Ever Driven after Alcohol or Drug Use by Region (of licensed drivers)**

	1992	1998	2003
Greater Vancouver	23%	29%	22%
Capital	35%	39%	26%
Interior	38%	43%	33%
Kootenays	38%	44%	37%
Upper Island	32%	42%	31%
Northeast	45%	39%	24%
Northwest	34%	41%	30%