

# ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INJURIES

## Facts about elementary school injuries in Utah

- ▶ 3,400 elementary students on average are injured per year.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ 2,800 school days are missed each year because of student injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Two-thirds of elementary school injuries occur during recess.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ 80% of student visits to the school nurse are for an injury-related complaint.<sup>2</sup>

### UTAH STUDENT INJURY REPORT DATA SCHOOL YEARS 2001-02 TO 2005-06 GRADES K-6

## SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM<sup>1</sup>

### WHO

- 5th and 6th graders had the highest number of injuries.
- Injuries occur more often to males (60%).

### WHAT

- 17,109 injuries to elementary school students.
- 14,166 school days missed due to school injuries.
- 680 calls to 9-1-1 due to school injuries.
- 203 hospitalizations due to school injuries.

### WHERE

- Most common body areas injured:  
head (20%), arm (16%), wrist (12%), and fingers (9%).
- Most common locations for injuries:  
playground/playfield (72%), classroom (6%), and gym (5%).

### WHY

- Most common activities for injuries:  
playing on bars (21%), running (18%), walking (9%),  
football (5%), basketball (4%), sliding (4%), and soccer (4%).

### WHEN

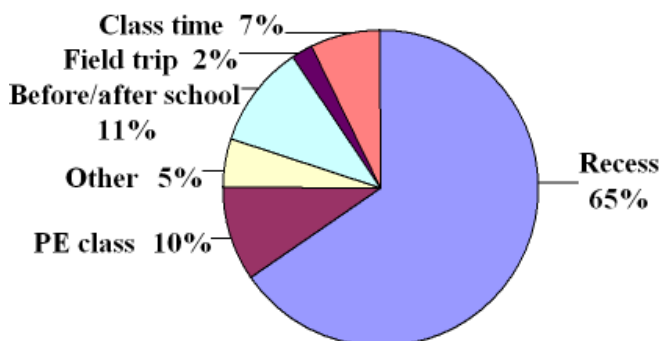
- Most injuries occurred during recess.



## PREVENTION TIPS<sup>3</sup>

- Actively supervise all student activities. This includes observing, listening to students, anticipating and responding to unsafe situations, and promoting positive behaviors.
- Make sure that paths through halls, stairs, gyms, and classrooms are uncluttered.
- Establish a climate that demonstrates respect, support, and caring and that does not tolerate harassment or bullying.
- Develop written policies regarding injury prevention (e.g., policies requiring bicycle helmets on school grounds, rules against pushing near playground equipment, encourage parents who drive children to school to use booster seats and seatbelts).

**Utah School Injuries by Period  
2001-02 to 2005-06**



Criteria for reportable injuries: Any injury severe enough to cause the loss of one-half day or more of school and/or warrants medical attention (e.g., nurse, M.D., ER staff, etc.).

## UTAH SCHOOL INJURY EXAMPLES

EXAMPLE 1: Boys were sitting on a bench and tripped a 4th grade girl as she walked past. She fell and broke her wrist.

**PREVENTION: Establish a climate that demonstrates respect, support, and caring and that does not tolerate harassment or bullying.**

EXAMPLE 2: During recess, a 2nd grade girl was climbing on the monkey bars. A bar was broken and she fell off, breaking her arm.

**PREVENTION: Regularly inspect and maintain equipment.**

EXAMPLE 3: A Kindergarten boy was jumping from one playground equipment to another when he fell breaking his arm and wrist. He was hospitalized for 10 days and missed 10 days of school.

**PREVENTION: Provide playground supervision by staff trained in injury awareness and prevention.**

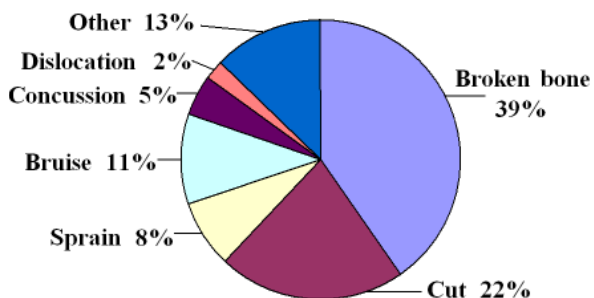
EXAMPLE 4: During recess, a 1st grader was playing catch football when a 5th grader going after another football collided into him. The 1st grader was hospitalized 4 days, suffered a broken leg, and missed 15 days of school.

**PREVENTION: Separate grades during recess. Provide playground supervision by staff trained in injury awareness and prevention.**

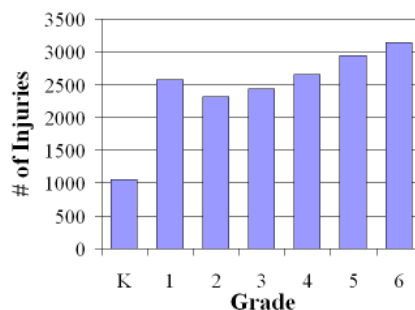
EXAMPLE 5: A 5th grade girl tripped over a backpack and fell on her face. She broke her glasses and needed stitches for her cut eyebrow.

**PREVENTION: Look for potential injury hazards and fix immediately. Establish and enforce safety guidelines in the classroom.**

Utah School Injuries by Severity  
2001-02 to 2005-06



Utah School Injuries by Grade  
2001-02 to 2005-06



## PLAYGROUND SAFETY



- Provide safety training for playground supervisors, teachers, and other staff.
- Supervise students closely during recess.
- Teach students about the proper use of playground equipment and proper play on the playground at least once each year.
- Develop playground safety rules, including the proper use of specific equipment.
- Enforce the rules and establish consequences for students who break them.
- Do not allow flips off swings, slides, or bars.
- Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment is in good condition. Promptly repair broken equipment.
- Inspect the playground area daily for glass and litter.

## DESIGNATE PERSON FOR COORDINATING ACTIVITIES<sup>3</sup>

A person at each school may be designated to have responsibility for coordinating safety activities. Schools also can establish a committee that focuses on injury prevention within their school. Such committees can meet regularly to assess needs; consider and respond to student, family, or community concerns for safety; and oversee design, implementation, and evaluation of injury prevention and emergency preparedness policies, programs, and services. School safety committees can strive to increase collaboration between schools and community agencies (e.g., law enforcement, fire department, public health agencies).

1. Utah Department of Health VIPP Student Injury Report Database.

2. Nader PR, Brink SG. Does visiting the school health room teach appropriate or inappropriate use of health services? *Am J Public Health* 1981;71:416-419.

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School Health Guidelines to Prevent Unintentional Injuries and Violence. *MMWR* 2001;50(No. RR-22).