

Elementary School Injuries in Utah

Introduction

In the 2007-2008 school year, 3,302 elementary school-age students (grades K-6) were injured at school. That's enough students to fill 143 average Utah elementary school classrooms.

Since the early 1980s, the Utah Department of Health, Utah State Office of Education, and local school districts have collected data on student injuries in Utah public schools. All 41 Utah school districts and more than 800 public schools have participated. The Student Injury Reporting System (SIRS) tracks injuries that occur while traveling to and from school and during school time or school-related activities. Injuries that meet the following criteria are entered into the SIRS database:

1. Injury caused the loss of at least one-half day of school and/or
2. Injury required medical attention and treatment from a school nurse, physician, or other health care provider.

Because the SIRS is voluntary, injuries may be underreported. A goal of the SIRS is to increase the number of reported injuries, which may suggest that student injuries are increasing when in reality only the reporting of injuries is increasing.

Utah and U.S.

Each year, more than 3.7 million children ages 5-19 are injured in the U.S. As many as 25 percent of all childhood injuries occur at schools and during off-campus school-related activities.¹

In Utah, school injuries peak in 6th and 8th grade, then decline among high school students.

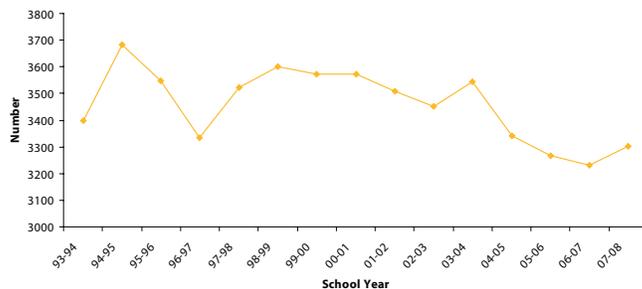


Utah Trends, 1993-2008

In Utah elementary schools, on average:

- 3,458 students are injured each year (Figure 1).
- 2,820 school days are missed each year because of a student injury.
- 9-1-1 is called four times a week because of a student injury.
- Four students are hospitalized each month because of a student injury.

Figure 1: Number of elementary school injuries by year, Utah, 1993-2008

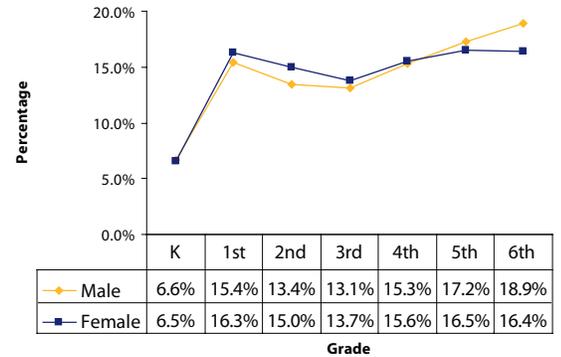


Age and Sex

Males sustain a higher percentage of injuries than females in every grade. Male and female kindergartners have the lowest percentage of injuries (6.6% and 6.5% respectively).

Male injuries peak in 6th grade at 18.9% while females have the highest percentage of injuries in 5th grade at 16.5% (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of elementary school injuries by grade and sex, Utah, 2005-2008



Location of Injury

From 2005-2008, 70.5% of elementary school injuries occurred on the playground and playfield in Utah. This equals the number of students needed to fill 100 average Utah elementary school classrooms. More playground injuries occurred during 5th grade (17.0%) than any other elementary school-age grade. Falls were the cause of 30.7% of all playground injuries, followed by tripping or slipping (26.9%) and collisions (21.3%).

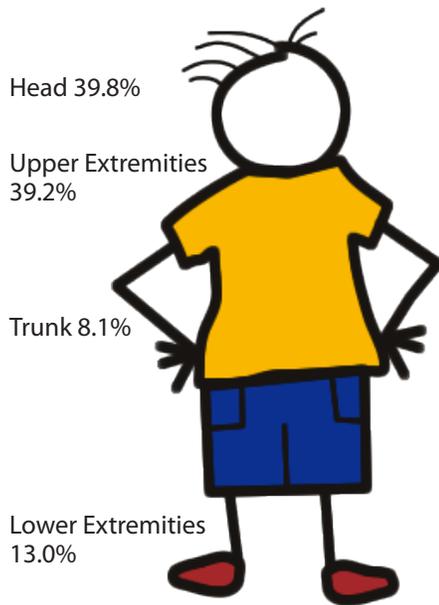
Two-thirds (65.2%) of elementary school injuries occurred during recess. The most common activities during which injuries

occurred were playing on bars (20.7%), running (18.0%), and walking (11.0%).

Type of Injury

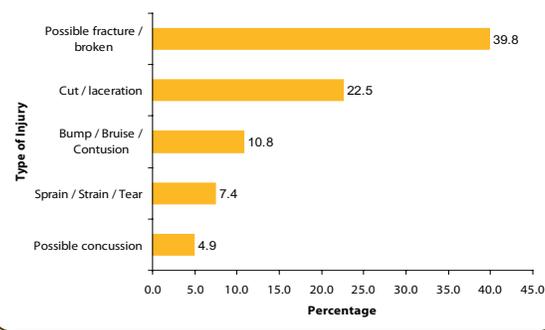
The most common area of the body injured was the arm (15.4%). Figure 3 shows the percentage of injury for the areas of the body.

Figure 3: Percentage of injury by areas of the body, Utah, 2005-2008



The top five injuries received included possible fracture/broken, cut/laceration, bump/bruise/contusion, sprain/strain/tear, and possible concussion (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage of elementary school injuries by type of injury, Utah, 2005-2008



Safety Tips

- Establish playground safety rules (such as no pushing, crowding, or shoving) with consequences for breaking rules.
- Always have trained adult supervisors present who:
 - Spread out and avoid congregating in groups.
 - Walk around the entire perimeter of the playground.
 - Find areas that enable sight from one end of the playground to the other.
- Develop a playground inspection and equipment maintenance checklist.
- Schedule regular inspections.
- Promptly repair broken playground equipment.
- Establish a school climate that demonstrates respect, support, and caring and does not tolerate harassment or bullying.
- Provide first aid training for school staff as outlined by state guidelines.

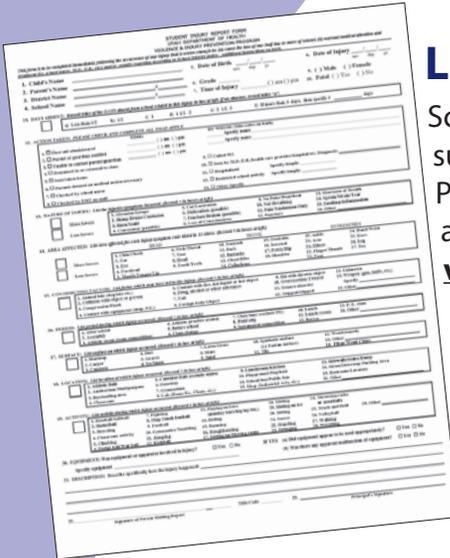
Cost

Each year, an average of 2,820 school days (grades K-6) are missed due to student injuries.

Laws

Schools that participate in the Student Injury Reporting System submit forms to the Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPPP) where the data are then stored and analyzed. For reporting forms, contact the VIPPP at (801) 538-6141 or vipp@utah.gov.

Utah Administrative Code R392-200 provides a list of health and safety requirements for public schools in Utah on things such as equipment condition, first aid training, prescription medications, etc. Details on these requirements can be found at www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r392/r392-200.htm#T7.



References

¹Miller TR, S. R. (1998). "How safe are our schools?" Am J Public Health 88: 413-18.

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If your life has been affected by a school-related injury, the Utah Department of Health wants to hear from you. Share your story with the Utah Health Story Bank at www.health.utah.gov/bhp/sb/.

Our Mission

We are a trusted and comprehensive resource for data related to violence and injury. Through education, this information helps promote partnerships and programs to prevent injuries and improve public health.

(801) 538-6141
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