

### Introduction

In the 2007-2008 school year, 2,726 secondary school-age students (grades 7-12) were injured at school. That's enough students to fill 121 average Utah secondary 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

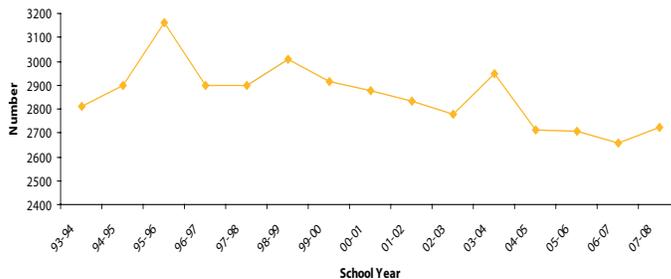


## Utah Trends, 1993-2008

In Utah secondary schools, on average:

- 2,855 students are injured each year (Figure 1).
- 2,528 school days are missed each year because of student injuries.
- 9-1-1 is called four times a week because of a student injury.
- Five students are hospitalized each month because of a student injury.
- One-third of injuries are sports-related.<sup>2</sup>

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

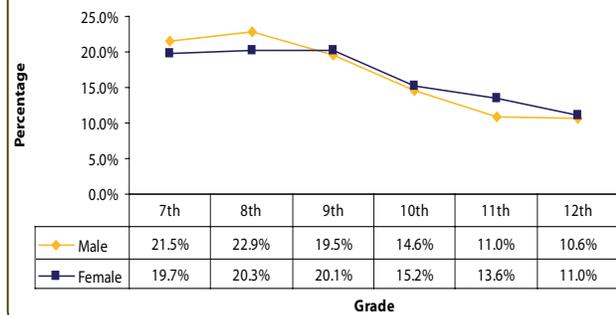


## Age and Sex

Male and female 12th graders have the lowest percentage of injuries (10.6% and 11.0% respectively). Male injuries peak in 8th grade at 22.9% while female injuries have the highest

percentage of injuries in 8th and 9th grades (20.3% and 20.1% respectively) (Figure 2). When looking at sports-related injuries only, males sustained 70.4% of these injuries.

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



## Location of Injury

From 2005-2008, 28.3% of secondary school injuries occurred in the gym in Utah. This equals the number of students needed to fill 34 average Utah secondary school classrooms.

More gym injuries occurred during 8th grade (22.0%) than any other secondary school grade. Collisions were the cause of 36.8% of all gym injuries, followed by overexerting or twisting (17.0%), tripping or slipping (16.7%), and using equipment

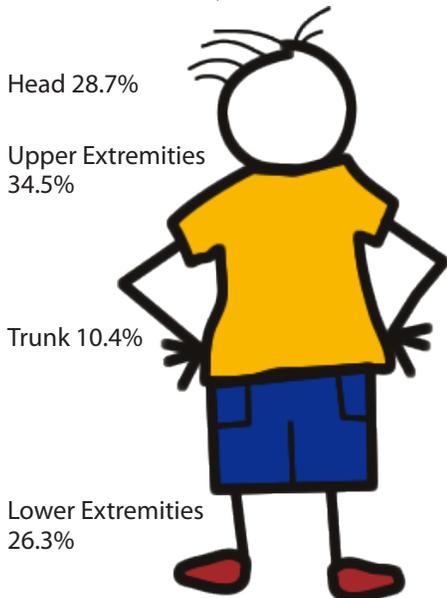
such as basketballs, soccer balls and volleyballs (14.3%). Of the injuries where using equipment may have led to the injury, 12.1% of these injuries were due to inappropriate use of the equipment. The most common contributing factor to sports-related injuries was collisions at 46.9%.

More than half (59.1%) of secondary school injuries occurred during class time. Of these injuries, 62.2% of injuries occurred during P.E. class. The most common activities during which injuries occurred were walking (12.2%), from classroom activities (11.5%), and playing basketball (10.3%).

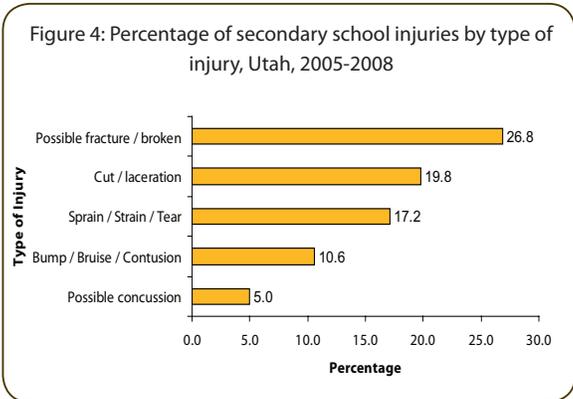
### Type of Injury

The most common area of the body injured was the finger or thumb (16.2%). 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, sprain/strain/tear, bump/bruise/contusion, and possible concussion (Figure 4).



### Safety Tips

- Provide regular injury prevention training for staff and students.
- P.E. teachers and coaches should be certified in CPR and first aid.
- Develop safety rules for gyms and train students to use equipment properly.
- Equipment should be in good condition and appropriate for the child’s age and size.
- Every athlete should receive a preseason physical exam by a qualified health care provider.
- Ensure that sports programs include conditioning, personal protective gear, and adult supervision.

- Have a trainer, physician, or EMT present at all athletic practices and competitions.
- Every athletic program should have an emergency plan to address medical care of injured athletes.
- Athletes should never play a sport when injured unless cleared by a health care provider.
- Conduct regular safety and hazard assessments in gyms and on sports fields.

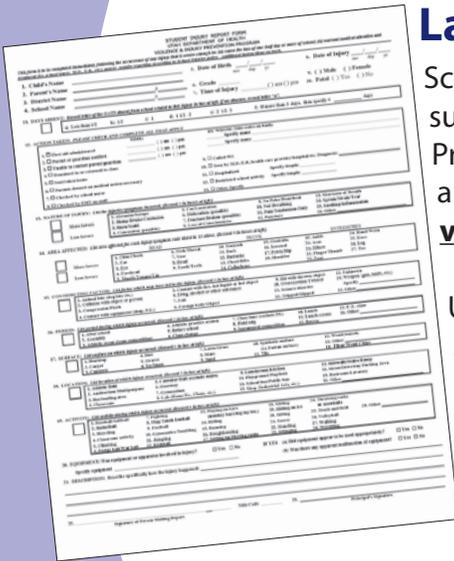
## Cost

Each year, an average of 2,528 school days (grades 7-12) 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 (VIPP), where the data are then stored and analyzed. For reporting forms, contact the VIPP at (801) 538-6141 or [vipp@utah.gov](mailto: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](http://www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r392/r392-200.htm#T7).



## References

- <sup>1</sup>Miller TR, S. R. (1998). "How safe are our schools?" Am J Public Health 88: 413-18.  
<sup>2</sup>Sports-related injuries include baseball, softball, basketball, flag football, touch football, football, kickball, soccer, track and field, volleyball, and wrestling.

*Last updated: October 2009*



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/](http://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.

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