

Young Athlete Program: Skateboarding Injuries

UPMC Sports Medicine's Young Athlete Program brings together a team of sports medicine experts that provide individualized attention for injury prevention and management for young athletes.

The goal of the Young Athlete Program is not only to treat athletes when injuries occur, but to focus on prevention and performance training to help them reach their full potential.

Our team of experts use cutting-edge, science-based techniques to help speed recovery, and quickly and safely prepare the athlete to return to competition. Physical therapists, physicians, athletic trainers, sports performance coaches, and other experts focus on prevention, nutrition, conditioning, and sport-specific training, tailored to an athlete's age and level of competition.

Common Skateboarding Injuries

According to the National Safety Council, first-time "boarders" (those skating for less than a week) account for one-third of the 50,000 skateboarding injuries treated each year in emergency departments. Head injuries, including concussions, pose the greatest danger to young athletes. These can involve time in a hospital, permanent impairment, and, in extreme cases, even death.

Young skateboarders are at greater risk of severe injury because they have a higher center of gravity, poor balance, slower reaction times, and less coordination than adults. They often overestimate their skill and may not judge barriers, ramps, and traffic appropriately.

Skateboarders may lose their balance and fall on an outstretched hand - causing wrist or shoulder injuries. Ankle fractures are also common.



Causes of Skateboarding Injuries

The most serious accidents happen when a boarder loses control and falls or runs into a car, road hazard, pedestrian, bicyclist, or another skateboarder. They also may run into trouble by attempting tricks beyond their skill level or skating on improper or irregular surfaces.

Preventing Skateboarding Injuries

Young athletes should always wear proper protective gear in good condition to reduce the risks of injuries. This includes:

- closed, slip-resistant shoes
- an appropriately fitted helmet
- pads for knees, elbows, and hands

Fitting a helmet

The best style and fit of a helmet is different for everyone. All helmets should meet or exceed the safety standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission or the Snell Memorial Foundation. Skateboarders should try on several styles and sizes to find one that fits correctly and securely.

A properly fitting helmet:

- is worn flat on the head with the bottom edge parallel to the ground
- sits low on the forehead
- has side straps that form a “V” around each ear
- has a buckle that fastens tightly, with room to put only two fingers between the helmet strap and the chin
- has pads that can be added to or removed from the inside, so the helmet fits snugly
- does not move in any direction when the wearer shakes his/her head
- does not interfere with movement, vision, or hearing.

Helmets should be replaced at least every five years or when it is damaged or outgrown.

Learning to fall while skateboarding

If they rehearse falling, young athletes can practice their coordination and reaction time and lessen their impact with the ground. When starting to fall, skateboarders should crouch down on the board to reduce the distance to the ground. They should try to roll and use their arms to absorb the force of the fall.

Learning to stop while skateboarding

Skateboarders should be well versed in stopping before they skate on a sidewalk or cul-de-sac, at a skate park, and especially around traffic.

Foot-braking is the first “trick” to learn when boarding.

- Turn the front foot forward in line with the board. The chest and face should be turned forward as well.
- Transfer weight to the front foot and keep it centered on that foot without leaning back or forward. At the same time, swing out the back leg, keeping it straight. Lower the back leg to the ground.

- Apply light pressure to the ground with the sole of the shoe. Continue to apply more pressure to slow down faster. Remember, nice and easy.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. This isn’t mastered in one try. Learn to foot-brake at a comfortable speed (one where braking would normally not be necessary), then work up to stopping from faster speeds.

When learning to brake, boarders often have trouble with the back foot “skipping” off the ground. This happens when too much weight is put on the back foot. Instead, make sure most weight is on the front leg, and lightly drag the back foot to slow down.

Screening Young Athletes

Our team of sports rehabilitation experts provide injury prevention screenings to young athletes. These screenings can help uncover existing injuries and areas of weakness, and can help prolong participation in sports.




These 45-minute screenings include:

- Flexibility
- Strength
- Functional movement assessment

The results of the screening will help determine if a young athlete needs to consult with a physician, participate in physical therapy, or consider sport-specific performance training. UPMC Sports Medicine has the expertise and comprehensive services to support young athletes.

Contact the Young Athlete Program

Regardless of age or sport, the Young Athlete Program has the expertise, technology, and services to make a difference for your athlete. For more information or to make an appointment, call **1-855-93-SPORT (77678)** or visit **UPMCSportsMedicine.com**.

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