

## CHILDHOOD INJURIES

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Unintentional injuries represent the most common form of injuries experienced by children aged 0 to 14 years. These injuries do not result from violence, but may include examples such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, sport injuries and unintentional poisoning.

The true incidence of unintentional injuries is much greater than that reflected in hospitalization and emergency room (ER) visit data. Many less serious injuries are largely undocumented as they are treated at home or in the community by health care professionals such as family doctors.

The unintentional injury hospitalization rate is the number of hospital admissions due to unintentional injuries per 100,000 population. It reflects more serious injuries that can result in death, permanent disabilities or functional limitations. The unintentional injury ER visit rate is the number of ER visits due to unintentional injuries per 100,000 population, and it primarily reflects minor injuries.

### IMPORTANCE

Unintentional injury is one of the most common causes of death, hospitalizations and ER visits among children aged 0 to 14 years in Toronto. Childhood injury is associated with a number of risk factors, such as the age, sex and behavioural traits of the child, socioeconomic status, parents' knowledge of childhood growth and development and elements of the built environment (e.g. safety features, availability of green space and recreational opportunity).<sup>1,2,3</sup> These factors further interact to heighten or lower the injury risk.

### STATUS AND TRENDS

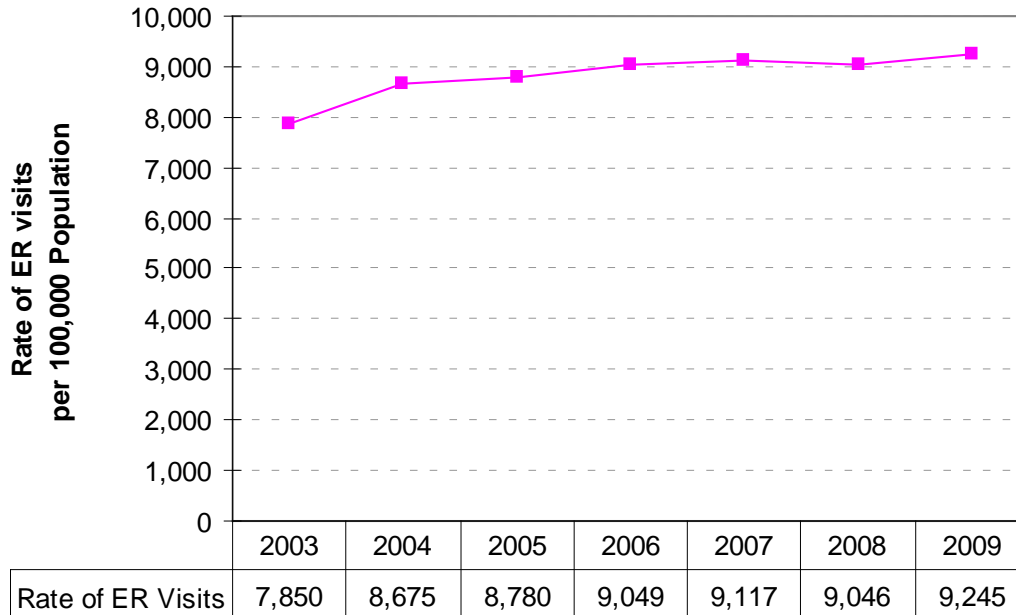
Among children aged 0 to 14 years in Toronto, there were 800 hospitalizations due to unintentional injuries in 2009, corresponding to a rate of 194 hospitalizations per 100,000. The number of hospitalizations is much less than the number of ER visits because most injuries are minor injuries and they are treated at the ER.

Unintentional injury is the leading cause of ER visits among children aged 0 to 14 years in Toronto. In 2009, there were approximately 38,100 visits to the ER due to unintentional injuries, corresponding to a rate of approximately 9,200 visits per 100,000. This rate increased gradually by 18% in seven years from 2003 to 2009 (Figure 1). Each year between 2003 and 2009, the highest rate was experienced by young children aged 1 to 4 years followed by older children aged 10 to 14 years.

For children aged 0 to 14 years, accidental falls are the most common type of injury, accounting for 40% of all ER visits due to unintentional injuries. The second most common type of injury is struck injuries, which include injuries that result from exposure to inanimate (e.g. hit by sports equipment) or animate (e.g. bitten by a dog) mechanical forces. Struck injuries account for 35% of all ER visits due to unintentional injuries.

The ER visit rate for unintentional injuries among children aged 0 to 14 years in the rest of the Greater Toronto Area (Durham, Halton, Peel and York) was approximately 9,500 visits per 100,000 in 2009. The Toronto rate is slightly lower than the rate for the rest of the Greater Toronto Area.

**Figure 1: Rate of Emergency Room (ER) Visits Due To Unintentional Injuries, Children Aged 0 to 14 Years, Toronto, 2003 to 2009**



Source: Inpatient Discharges 2003 to 2009, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, IntelliHEALTH ONTARIO, Date Extracted: December 2010.

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