

Skating Safe

How to Prevent In-line Skating Injuries

In-line skating is the hottest, fastest-growing new sport around. There are over one million in-line skaters in Michigan alone! Most in-line skaters are kids under 12 and teenagers. Most are beginners.

Don't let an injury stop your fun! Remember four things:

1. Educate yourself before you skate.
2. Wear the right equipment.
3. Skate alert!
4. Stay in control!

Injuries are preventable! Before you put on that shiny new pair of blades know the basics. You need to know how to stride, stop, and turn before you're safe to skate.

Traffic Basics

1. Skate on the right side of a lane.
2. Announce your intention to pass by saying, "passing on the left" as you approach pedestrians or other skaters.
3. Remember: pedestrians have the right of way. Always!

Learn the laws and ordinances that apply to in-line skating in your community. A phone call to the local police department is all it takes.

Learn and be ready to obey all traffic laws. In-line skaters follow the same rules of the road as bikes and cars, whether skating on paths, sidewalks, or roads.

About 111,000 in-line skaters paid a visit to the ER in 1998. Here's what they hurt: 27% had wrist injuries, 16% had injuries to the leg, knee, or ankle, 21% had injuries to the lower arm or elbow, 12% had injuries to the head and/or face, and 41% had broken bones.

Always wear a helmet. Every skater needs a helmet. The first thing to look for is a sticker of approval from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Helmets made after March of 1999 without these stickers don't meet accepted safety standards. Always replace your helmet if you fall and take a blow to the head.

The second thing to look for is a helmet that fits you. It should be snug so that if you open your mouth wide it feels kind of tight. It should rest low on your forehead, and the front and back straps should come together to form a "V" right below your ears.

Elbow pads, wrist guards, and kneepads are essential!

Elbow pads protect a lot of bone. Good wrist guards protect the palms of your hands and keep your wrist from bending backwards during a fall. Injuries to the wrist are the most common in-line skating injury. You are 10 times more likely to hurt your wrists if you don't wear wrist guards. Finally, kneepads help you slide along the pavement when you fall. Sliding helps prevent more serious injuries.

Skate safely! Beginners should skate with a more experienced partner, away from crowds and traffic. Leave your headphones at home! Skating with headphones or anything that prevents you from hearing well keeps you from paying attention to traffic, pedestrians, and your skating partner.

Skate on dry pavement only. Even the most experienced skaters can't keep control on wet surfaces.

Skate clear of water, oil, sand and road debris. Stay clear of rough surfaces and broken or buckled concrete.

Skate in the daylight. If you must skate at dusk or dawn, wear reflective clothing and carry a flashlight.

Skate where there is little or no traffic.

Do not skate: if it is dark, foggy or raining; if you or the traffic coming toward you will be heading directly in the sun; if the pavement is slick because of rain, sprinklers or fog; if the pavement is slippery with wet leaves; if you have to skate where there are a lot of cars; if you are not wearing safety equipment.



Oakland County Health Division will not deny participation in its programs based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age or disability. State and Federal eligibility requirements apply for certain programs.