

Kidsafe WA

Kidsafe WA is the leading independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting safety and preventing childhood injuries and accidents in Western Australia. Injuries are the leading cause of death among Australian children aged zero to fourteen, accounting for nearly half of all deaths in this age group. More children die of injury than of cancer, asthma and infectious diseases combined. However, many of these deaths and injuries can be prevented. Kidsafe WA works to educate and inform parents and children on staying safe at home, at play and on the road.

Perth Children's Hospital Injury Surveillance System

Perth Children's Hospital (PCH) is the only paediatric hospital in Western Australia and is the referral centre for paediatric illness and injury within the state. Each year approximately 64,000 children present to the PCH Emergency Department (ED). The PCH ED Injury Surveillance System is designed to capture data related to all children who present with an injury. This bulletin summarises injuries occurring during the summer months of December, January and February across the five-year period between July 2017 and June 2022.

Injuries Occurring in Summer

A snapshot of injuries occurring in summer

- On average there are 4,484 injury presentations to PCH ED each **Summer**. A total of 22,422 over the five year period.
- Of the summer months, the highest number of injuries occur during **December** (8.0%, n=7,813)
- **Males** accounted for 56.8 percent (n=12,725) of presentations.
- Children aged between **0 and 4 years** accounted for the majority (39.4%, n=8,825) of summer injuries.
- Almost all injuries (97.1%, n=21,773) were deemed **unintentional**.
- **Falls** were the most common cause of injury, accounting for 34.8 percent (n=7,797) of injuries. Followed by **blunt force** injuries accounting for 23.6 percent (n=5,296) of injuries.
- **Drowning, bite & sting and sunburn** presentations account for higher proportions of injury during summer compared to the rest of the year.
- The **Home** was the most common location for injury to occur during summer (34.2%, n=1,807).
- The majority of patients were **discharged** with treatment complete (85.2%, n=19,103)



Partner:



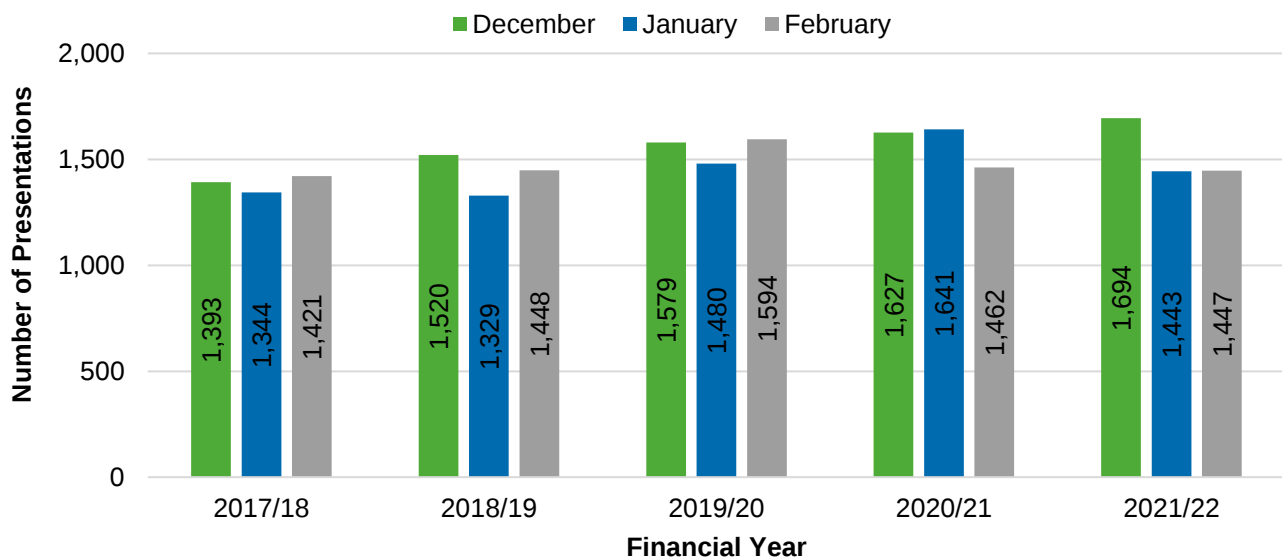
Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Introduction

Summer is a time when many children and adults relax, go on holidays and enjoy sunny long days. During this time of year children are on school holidays and often spend their time participating in a variety of recreational activities. With the absence of day-to-day routines and holidays to unfamiliar environments, the nature and risk of certain injuries can change.

Between July 2017 to June 2022, a total of 97,696 children presented to PCH ED with an injury. Just under a quarter (23.0%, n=22,422) of these injury presentations occurred during the summer months of December, January and February. December accounts for the greatest number of injury presentations accounting for 8.0 percent (n=7,813) of all injuries, with January and February accounting for 7.4 percent (n=7,237) and 7.5 percent (n=7,372) respectively (Figure 1).

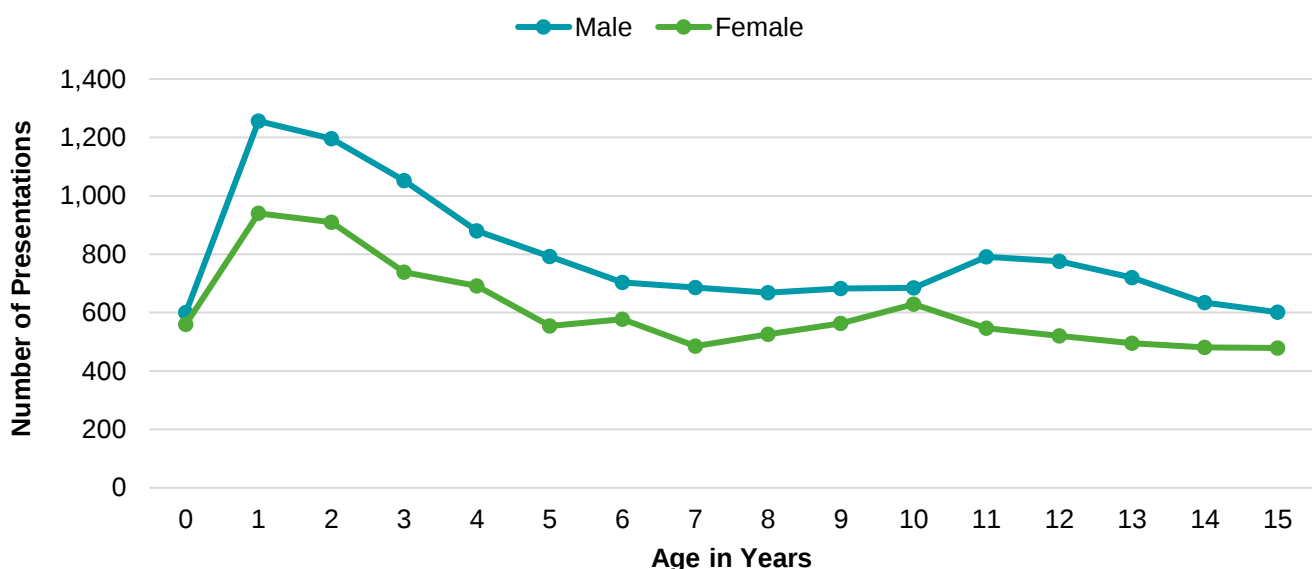
Figure 1: Injuries Occuring in Summer by Financial Year



Demographics

Males accounted for a higher number of injuries during summer (56.8%, n=12,725) in comparison to females (43.2%, n=9,697). Injury prevalence was highest for those aged one (9.8%, n=2,196) and two (9.4%, n=2,106) years of age with a decreasing trend over time as children became older, with a slight rise in males during early adolescence (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Injuries Occuring in Summer by Age

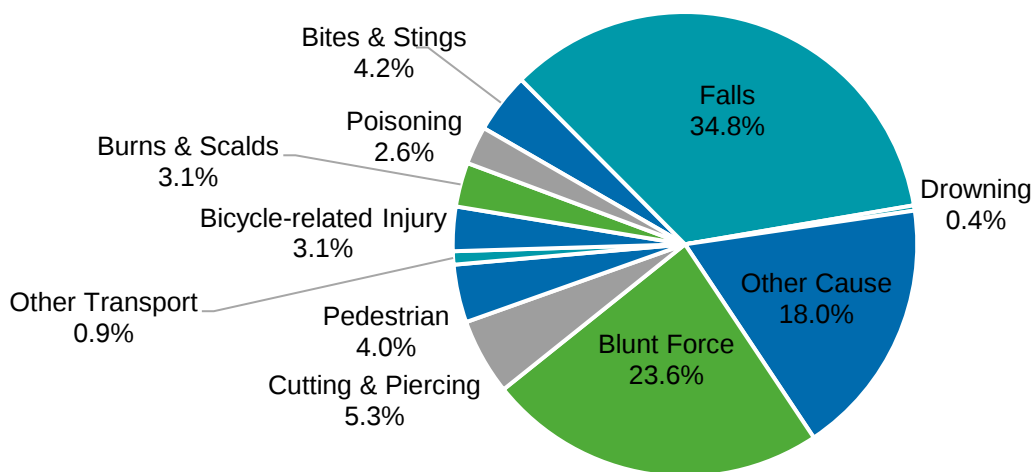


Injury

Every child that attends the PCH ED is allocated a triage category between one and five with one being most urgent and five being least urgent. Category 4 (Semi-urgent) was the most commonly allocated triage time for summer injuries accounting for 77.6 percent (n=17,393). It was followed by category 3 - Urgent (17.1%, n=3,832) and category 2 - Emergency (4.3%, n=970). Category 1 – Resus and category 5 – Non-urgent accounted for the remaining. Almost all of injury presentations to PCH ED during summer were deemed unintentional (97.1%, n=21,773).

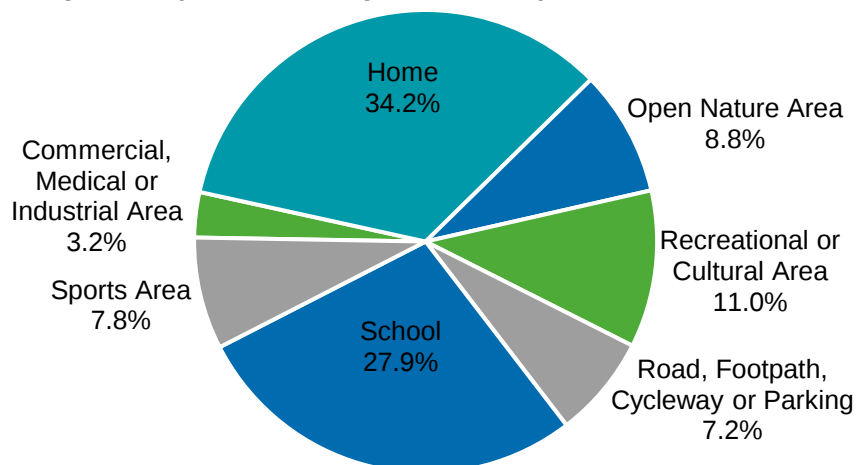
The most common cause of injury during summer was falls (34.8%, n=7,797) followed by blunt force injuries (23.6%, n=5,296) (Figure 3). Of note, the proportion of drowning presentations is considerably higher than the yearly average of 0.2 percent. Similarly bites and stings accounts for only 2.8 percent of injuries across the year, but 4.2 percent during the warmer summer months. A burn by a thermal mechanism, such as sunburn, is also more prevalent during summer accounting for 0.5 percent compared to 0.2 percent throughout the year.

Figure 3: Injuries Occuring in Summer by Cause



For more than three-quarters of injuries (76.4%, n=17,141) location was recorded as unknown. Of known locations (23.6%, n=5,281), the Home accounted for more than one third of injuries (34.2%, n=1,807), followed by School (27.9%, n=1,472) and Recreational or Cultural Areas (11.0%, n=580) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Injuries Occuring in Summer by Known Location



Most presentations to the PCH ED during summer were based on concerns from themselves or a relative (89.8%, n=20,125). This was followed by referrals from other hospitals (4.7%, n=1,048) and general practitioners (4.3%, n=965). The majority of patients were discharged with a complete treatment (85.2%, n=19,103). A further 13.7% (n=3,082) of patients were admitted to hospital for additional treatment, and the remaining children either left at their own risk, did not wait for treatment or were referred to another department or hospital.

Prevention

During the summer months children are more likely to spend their time around the home, playing outdoors and participating in a range of activities. School holidays, Christmas and New Years can bring new toys, celebrations, family road trips and many other summer activities outside the normal day-to-day routine. The following steps can help reduce the risk of injury during summer:

Around the Home:

- Ensure toys are appropriate for the child's age and stage of development and are of good quality.
- Be aware of toys, novelty items and decorations containing button batteries around Christmas time and ensure children do not have access to these.
- Actively supervise children during gatherings and ensure everyone knows who the responsible adult is.
- Always actively supervise young children within arm's reach around water.
- Restrict access to water. Home swimming pools and inflatable pools deeper than 30cm must be fenced.
- Check fences for damage and ensure the pool gate is kept shut with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Keep gardens well maintained to eliminate hiding places for insects, spiders and reptiles.
- When playing outside, enclosed shoes, pants and long sleeved clothing will assist in protecting children from insect bites.
- Educate your children to interact with pets in a friendly manner and teach them to not disturb pets when they are eating, sleeping or caring for young. Always ask the owner's permission before petting.

At Play:

- Always supervise children when they are playing and teach them how to use equipment safely.
- Ensure that there is only one person at a time jumping on the trampoline.
- Ensure trampolines and playground equipment meet Australian Standards and are in good condition.
- Use trampoline safety features such as pads to cover the frames and springs and a net/enclosure.
- Provide a clear area free from hard objects around and underneath trampolines and play equipment.

On the Road:

- When using or gifting bicycles and other small-wheeled devices, ensure that they are the right size for your child and that safety equipment is provided. Children should always wear a helmet that complies with the current Australian Standards and fits the child's head properly.
- A footpath or shared path is the best place for children. Riders must keep left and give way to pedestrians.
- Children riding bikes and other small-wheeled devices should wear clothing that is highly visible to road users. This can include the use of reflective tape, reflectors, flashing lights and visibility flags.
- Teach children how to cross the road safely and be aware of cars entering or exiting driveways.
- When travelling in the car ensure children use a correctly fitted child car restraint for their age and size. For older children, ensure they use a seatbelt at all times when travelling in the car.
- Never leave children unattended in a car. On a typical Australian summer day, the temperature inside a parked car can be 30° higher than the outside temperature.

Beat the Heat:

- When the UV index is 3 or above Slip on a sun protective clothing, Slop on SPF30 or higher sunscreen, Slap on a broad brimmed hat, Seek shade and Slide on some sunglasses to protect yourself from the sun. For more information visit: <https://cancerwa.asn.au/cancer-prevention/sunsmart/>.
- Ensure children drink adequate amounts of fluid. Water is the best choice for children to stay hydrated. If they are younger than six months, offer your baby extra breastfeeds or formula to drink.
- Dress babies in light loose clothing and avoid overdressing them.
- Try to stay indoors with your baby during the hottest part of the day.

Suggested citation:

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For further information please contact Kidsafe WA