



Equestrian Safety

The responsibility of caring for a horse, and the companionship that develops while riding a horse for recreation or work, are promoted as positive growth experiences for youth. The size, speed and unpredictable nature of horses require safety precautions to be practiced.

Children's
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Equestrian Safety



What are the injury facts for youth involved in equestrian activities?

Youth under 15 years represent one in five equestrian-related emergency department visits in the U.S.

One in three equestrian-related injuries occur while dismounted. Dismounted injuries most often involve a youth being kicked or stepped on by a horse.

Mounted injuries most often involve a youth falling off or being thrown from a horse.

What factors are key to safety around horses?

- Wearing an approved ASTM equestrian helmet
- Safe riding areas (e.g. trails and riding arenas)
- Adequate motor skills and mature judgment to recognize potential hazards
- Proper training in riding style and horse safety
- An understanding of horse behavior
- Saddle fits the rider

What developmental factors must youth possess to participate in equestrian-related activities?

- Physical size, strength, balance, and coordination to control a horse
- Cognitive capacity to anticipate, recognize, and react to potential hazards
- Ability to follow directions of a responsible adult
- Good judgment to be responsive and minimize risk

Note: Children with special health care needs should be evaluated by appropriate medical personnel to determine if therapeutic riding is a suitable and appropriate activity

What strategies promote safe equestrian activities among youth?

- Supervision based on developmental and skill level
- Match horse with child's developmental ability and size
- Utilization of appropriate riding areas
- Requiring all riders to wear an American Society for Testing Materials approved helmet when mounted and dismounted
- One rider per horse

What role do child safety advocates play in addressing equestrian safety?

- Be responsible and a good role model
- Promote safe use based on current practices and injury experience
- Evaluate on-going prevention and practices
- Monitor childhood injury reports/data
- Inform parents about equestrian safety
- Promote education of children about equestrian safety

Where can I go to learn more about equestrian safety?

Additional information and links on equestrian safety for youth can be found on the National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety Web site <http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/Resources/Equestrian/horses.htm>. Information available includes a comprehensive listing of resources, a list of other organizations working on equine safety, and developmental guidelines for youth equestrian activities, and a fact sheet. For technical assistance on youth equestrian-related injury prevention call 1-888-924-7233.

The National Children's Center strives to enhance the health and safety of all children involved in agricultural work and living in rural settings. The center is a program of the Marshfield Clinic Research Foundation.



National **Children's** Center
for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety

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