

# Safety Fact Sheet

## Roller blades and Roller skates

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### What are roller blading and roller skating?

Roller blading and roller skating are popular recreational activities in Australia. These activities are performed by a wide range of age groups. It is more common in urban areas where footpaths and designated areas are more readily available.

### How may a child be injured?

#### Falls

- Children may lose their ability to control the roller blades or roller skates and fall.
- Children may fall as a result of external factors such as the appearance of a sudden/unexpected obstacle in their riding path, or an uneven surface.

#### Cuts, bruises, fractures and friction burns

- Children may sustain cuts, bruises, fractures and/or friction burns as a result of a crash/fall.

### How common are these injuries?

In Victoria between the period July 1996 to June 2004, there were 7,315 injuries to children associated with small wheel vehicles (in-line skates, rollerskates, skateboards and scooters). Of these 3047 (42%) were associated with in-line skating (rollerblading) and rollerskates.<sup>1</sup> There are no recent published statistics available for NSW.

Most injuries from skating occur from falls. This is usually the result of losing control or an inability to stop effectively on the skates. At greatest risk are young children, learners and experienced skaters performing tricks at high speed. Serious injuries and fatalities can also result when children skating on the road are hit by motor vehicles. The ages where injuries are most frequent are from 5-19 years. The upper limb and wrist are the most common areas of injury. Other areas include elbows, knees and the head.

Contributing factors to injuries are:

- Speed
- obstacles
- being unable to stop
- steep slopes
- hard landing surfaces

### Is there a Law or Australian Standard for roller blades and roller skates?

There are no Australian Standards for roller blades and roller skates.

### Road Laws for Skaters.

The Roads and Traffic Authority advises that skates are best used in designated areas, such as ramps and skate parks. Skates may be used on footpaths, regardless of the age of the user, unless there are designated signs specifying that they are not to be used in those areas.

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Skates can only be used on minor roads (those with no lane lines marked) between dawn and dusk.<sup>2</sup>

### Remember:

- Equipment should be checked for wear and tear prior to use.
- If you are using second-hand skates, make sure that they are stable and in good condition.
- Skates should be fitted correctly so that they feel comfortable but firm on the feet of the child.
- Ensure learners have a safe area to practice.
- Supervision of learners is recommended until the child is sufficiently skilled to skate safely.
- Children should not be allowed to skate down steep slopes, in traffic or poor light.
- Helmets, wrist, elbow and knee guards should always be worn.
- Young children, learners and experienced skaters performing tricks are at highest risk of injury while skating.
- Use of designated skate parks and ramps is recommended.
- When riding on the footpath, watch out for pedestrians, especially the elderly.
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope recommend that you check for products that have been recalled ([www.recalls.gov.au](http://www.recalls.gov.au)) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.



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<sup>1</sup> Ashby K, Child Injury Associated with Small Wheel Devices, 2005, Monash University, <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/VISU/reports/wheel.html>

<sup>2</sup> Roads & Traffic Authority, What the Law Says and Safety Advice for Bicycles, Rollerblades, Scooters and Skateboards. RTA/Pub 03.132 ([http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/schoolcommunitylanguagebrochures/the\\_law\\_bicycles\\_english.pdf](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/schoolcommunitylanguagebrochures/the_law_bicycles_english.pdf))

