



Sledding & Tobogganing Injuries in Alberta

February 2026

SLEDDING INJURIES

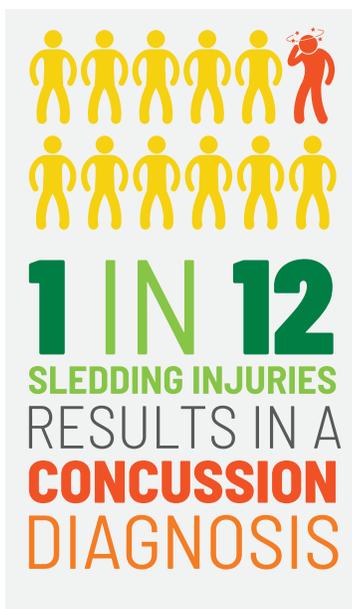
Sleds and toboggans are simple platform-shaped recreational devices used for sliding downhill on snow. Often made of plastic or wood, they are light weight and easily carried by children. But, this simplicity means that there is often very little steering control.

For the sledding seasons of 2015 to 2023 in Alberta (November to March), people using sleds and toboggans accounted for approximately¹:

669 EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS (5 PER DAY)

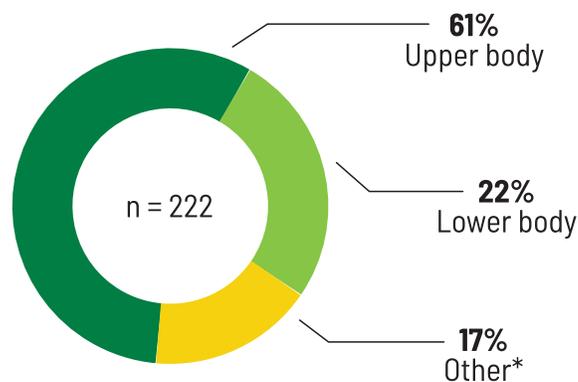
222 FRACTURES

54 CONCUSSIONS

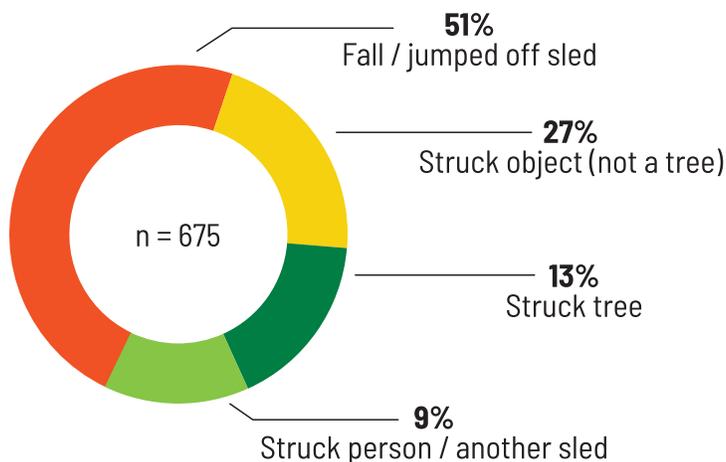


Bone fractures are diagnosed in 33% of all sledding injuries that are seen in emergency departments.

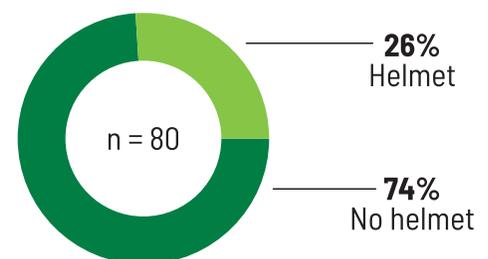
Percentage of fractures by body region



Mechanism of Sledding Injury ¹



Percentage of Helmet Use



Of those where helmet use was documented, 74% were **not** wearing a helmet at the time of the incident.¹

¹Other body regions include: head, vertebra, thorax, pelvis, lower back, hip.

PREVENTION MESSAGES

PROTECT YOUR HEAD

As few as 50% of sledding patients seen in emergency departments were wearing a helmet.¹

- » Wear an approved ski or snowboard helmet as they are designed for similar types of impact and protection.
- » Helmet use can reduce the risk of head injury by 35%.^{2,5}
- » During recreational sledding, the head represents the most often injured body region. Head injury is the leading cause of hospital admissions, serious long-term effects, and death in snow sports.^{2,5}
- » Whether children are wearing a helmet or not largely depends on rules being set by adults, as well as parental encouragement and role-modelling of helmet use.^{4,5}

Each sled-related visit to an Emergency Department costs \$441. This doesn't include hospital admissions or personal costs to families such as time away from work, away from school, pain and suffering and any follow-up medical treatment or rehabilitation.

ALWAYS MAKE SURE THE SLEDDING HILL IS SAFE FOR USE

Not all hills are safe enough to use for sledding. Use designated sledding areas whenever possible.

- » Make sure the run is clear of obstacles such as trees, poles, debris, and there is enough distance between you and other sledders.
- » Make sure there is enough stopping room at the end of the run.
- » Make sure the run does NOT end at a road, parking lot, pond, or other unsafe area.
- » Move off to the side when walking back up the hill so you are not in the path of other sledders.

KEEP YOUR SLED UNDER CONTROL

Most sleds have little-to-no steering control.

- » Do not sled in a head-first or belly-flop position.^{2,6} Kneeling or sitting gives you the most control and the ability to leap out of the way of obstacles.
- » Always try to keep your sled on the ground. Avoid jumps and launches.
- » Plastic sheets ("crazy carpets") should not be used because they are the least controllable and can be pierced by objects in the ground.⁶

DO NOT LOAD THE SLED WITH MORE PASSENGERS THAN IT WAS DESIGNED FOR

- » Traditional wooden toboggans can often carry up to 2 people. Be sure to read the label on your particular sled and do not exceed its capacity.

PROTECT YOUR CHILD

- » Children sledding should always be supervised by adults.
- » The greatest number of sledding injuries occur in children between 5 and 14 years of age, globally.²

REFERENCES

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6. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Sledding Injury Prevention [Internet]. Illinois, USA: AAOS; 2016 [cited 19 Apr 2021]. Available from: <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/staying-healthy/sledding-injury-prevention/>

If you would like additional information about this or other types of injuries, please visit <http://injurypreventioncentre.ca> or contact us via phone at **780.492.6019** or email ipc@ualberta.ca



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Funding and Support

The Injury Prevention Centre receives core business funding from Alberta Health and is part of the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta. Provision of funding by Alberta Health does not signify that this project represents the policies or views of Alberta Health.